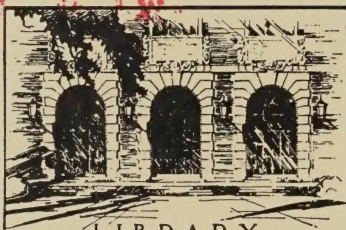


PLAYS FROM BROWNING



LEILA A. WADE




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PLAYS FROM BROWNING

Plays from Browning

Including

"The Flight of the Duchess"
"My Last Duchess" *"Porphyria's Lover"*
and *"A Light Woman"*

By

LEILA A. WADE



1923

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In appreciation of his valuable criticism and kindly encouragement, this book is respectfully dedicated to Dr. John Clark Jordan of the University of Arkansas.

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THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

ACT I

THE COMING OF THE BRIDE

(The time of the play is Spring. The scene is a portion of the walk leading from the Dangel Castle to the castle gates.

The dark, arrogant young *Duke of Dangel* is sitting on a garden seat. He is engaged in a careful study of some old drawings.

Orson, a groom, dressed in a heavy hunting costume of a medieval style, enters from the left.)

Orson: Your Grace!

Duke (inspecting *Orson*, consulting the drawings):

Turn around. That costume will do very well.

Orson (wiping his face): Yes, my lord?

Duke (impatiently): What is it?

Orson: Red Berold has been fighting Roland again,
and . . .

Duke: The brute!

Orson: Roland is done for, this time.

Duke: Completely?

Orson: He will have to be shot.

Duke: The devil! Well, I leave it to you; Berold is a demon.

Orson: It's his nature; he's not mean, really.

Duke: Stable him if necessary. It will be a pleasure to master him.

Orson: He'll never own a master.

Duke: That is the one thing he will do.

Orson: He'll die first.

Duke: Just as he chooses. Orson!

Orson: Yes, my lord.

Duke: When the carriage comes, go to the gate and bring your new mistress here.

Orson: Very well, my lord. (Exit right.)

(The tall, painted, yellow *Dowager Duchess of Dangel* enters from the right.)

D. Duchess: I met Orson just now.

Duke: Well?

D. Duchess: That heavy hunting costume is ridiculous this hot day.

Duke: Nevertheless, I choose to revive every detail of the medieval custom.

D. Duchess (sneeringly): So it would seem; even to the choosing of your bride.

Duke: Why not? I admire the sagacity my ancestors manifested by that particular custom.

D. Duchess: On behalf of the late Duke, I thank you.

Duke: I meant no reflection on my father, but if he had desired an obedient duchess—?

D. Duchess: Yes.

Duke: You cannot deny that his choice would have been wiser if he had followed the ancient practice of our house.

D. Duchess: I neither admit nor deny it. Theoretically, you are right; we have yet to see the proof.

Duke (confidently): I know how to choose a wife. You will see that I have made no mistake.

D. Duchess: Your convent-bred choice may have a will of her own.

Duke: In that case, it will bend to mine.

D. Duchess: She may refuse the homage and obedience you expect.

Duke: Therein lies the wisdom of my choice.

D. Duchess: In what way?

Duke: Being convent-bred, she will know nothing but obedience to authority.

D. Duchess: She may develop.

Duke: In that possibility lies the crowning beauty of the plan.

D. Duchess: How so?

Duke: Being parentless, she will have no recourse whatever. I can do with her as I wish.

D. Duchess: Cleverly conceived, my son, but you are reckoning with unknown blood.

Duke: My ancestors were successful; I do not fear.

D. Duchess: That is well, since the die is cast. I shall be interested in observing the first lesson in subordination.

Duke (pompously): I shall make no exactions just at first. I shall see that she gradually comes to an understanding of her situation.

D. Duchess: No doubt you will. She will see you with a broken neck before that time, however, if you continue to ride as you did yesterday.

Duke: I was merely the leader in the chase as I should have been, according to the feudal custom.

D. Duchess: Feudal custom? Feudal foolishness! I certainly regret that last stay in Paris.

Duke: Why?

D. Duchess: It is at the bottom of this nonsense.

Duke: You call it nonsense? I learned in Paris that only my medieval ancestors have been the real rulers of their estates.

D. Duchess: What of it?

Duke: Only that I, too, mean to rule; I propose to restore the castle to its original condition, and to govern accordingly.

D. Duchess: So I have heard you say. So I have observed, still—I cannot become accustomed to these—Is not that the carriage coming down Walden Hill?

Duke (indifferently): Yes. Did I tell you that the ivy on that left wing is to be cleared away?

D. Duchess (displeased): You did not. Another custom, I suppose?

Duke: Yes, these cuts show the castle absolutely bare during the Black Duke's reign.

D. Duchess: Why should you reduce everything to ugliness because the Black Duke had no sense of beauty?

Duke: You may as well know that I am planning extensive changes in the grounds.

D. Duchess: Yonder they come. Summon the servants.

Duke: They are to wait in the hall.

D. Duchess: Then let us go on to the gate.

Duke: Orson will bring her here.

D. Duchess (keenly): What custom is this?

Duke: The Black Duke—

D. Duchess: Oh, if that is the case—How very small she is! (*The Duke* rises and stands beside his mother.) You did not tell me she was dark. (*The bride and Orson* enter. She is surely the smallest lady alive. Her hat is in her hand and her hair is hanging in curls. Her dark eyes are

dancing like the May sunshine. The *Duke* steps forward with his grandest smile.)

Duke: Welcome to Dangel Castle. (Kissing her hand.) Permit me, the Duchess of Dangel. My mother, the Dowager Duchess of Dangel.

D. Duchess (bowing): The Duchess of Dangel is welcome.

Duchess (chilled): Thank you.

D. Duchess: I trust you are not fatigued?

Duchess: Not in the least, thank you. I enjoyed the ride. (Impulsively.) Oh, I did enjoy it. I never dreamed of anything so beautiful as the hedgerows in blossom.

Duke: A very common sight. Was it new to you?

Duchess: Naturally! This is the first time I have been outside the convent walls since my second birthday. (Lifting her arms, stretching herself on tip-toe.) I wanted to fly like the birds we saw. Like the great bird that circled and circled.

Duke: An eagle, I suppose?

Duchess: Yes, I asked its name. (Lifting her arms, skipping a step or two, childishly.) I almost thought I could fly if I tried.

(*Orson* smiles at her appreciatively, the *Duke* tolerantly.)

Duke: The Duchess of Dangel must be content to remain on the ground.

Duchess: Oh, no. (Springing gracefully into the garden seat.) I can jump if I can't fly. I have dreamed and dreamed of running and jumping. (Yearningly.) I want to race between those hedgerows.

D. Duchess: Very unusual custom, I am sure. (Maliciously, to the *Duke*.) Did the Black Duke's Duchess race between the hedgerows?

Duke (with a scowl for his mother): You are jesting, of course. The Duchess of Dangel could not so far forget her dignity.

Duchess (sitting down): Indeed, I was quite serious. Even though I have always walked primly, the desire for swift motion has been mine.

Duke: We should outgrow our childhood fancies.

Duchess: But if you have never had a childhood, how can you outgrow it?

Duke: Oh, in that case—Shall we enter?

Duchess: If you wish. (Wistfully) I should like to stay out forever. Oh, what a lovely green cascade!

Duke: The ivy? It is to be cleared away.

Duchess: Cleared away?

Duke: I am restoring the castle to its primitive austerity.

Duchess: But surely the ivy may remain. It is so very beautiful. You will destroy it?

Duke: It will be cleared away.

(The *Duke* bows to his mother, who precedes him, then to his bride. She glances around in a bewildered fashion. Her face brightens as she meets *Orson's* friendly glance. She nods to him with a quick, bird-like motion. Then, leaning on the *Duke's* arm, exeunt left. *Orson* looks after them and shakes his head as much as to say, "Poor little girl, I saw her first hair turn gray." He goes out right.)

ACT II

SCENE 1

THE SUBORDINATION

(The time is an early hour on a summer morning. The place is the Dangel Stables. The scene shows the heavy closed stable doors at center back. The stage is bare except for a horse block and a bench or two.

The *Duchess*, with a cloak around her shoulders, enters from the right. She attempts to open the doors, but she has not the strength. She stamps her foot.)

Duchess: Orson! (Pounding on the door) Oh, Orson! Orson!

Orson (sliding the door open a little, holding a lighted lantern): My lady!

Duchess: How is he, Orson?

Orson: Pretty bad, the swelling is. I have been bathing him. How did you know—?

Duchess: Jacynth told me. I want to see him.

Orson: He is not a pleasant sight.

Duchess: That is not his fault. I have brought him some sugar. He will feel better when I pet him.

Orson: Well, here he is, then. (Stepping aside. The *Duchess* enters. *Orson* stands in the opening holding the lantern.)

Duchess (in a shocked tone): Oh, Orson— Poor Berold— Poor old Red Berold! His eyes— Orson, are his eyes out? How pitiful.

Orson: They are just swollen shut, my lady.

Duchess: I'm sorry, Berold. There—eat it. We must do what we are told. Poor, poor Berold. I'll come again. (After a time.) Good-by.
(The *Duchess* comes out front. *Orson* follows, closing the stable door behind him.)

Duchess: Will he die?

Orson: It's hard telling. I think not. I've seen them worse than Berold when his Grace breaks them.

Duchess: Breaks them? Yes, that is it—breaks them. Is it necessary to beat them? Is there no other way?

Orson: It is his Grace's way. I can take them when they are colts and gentle them, but his Grace will not have them gentled.

Duchess: Did Berold deserve that—that fearful punishment?

Orson: His Grace seemed to think so. He and Berold had different ideas of right conduct.

Duchess: Wouldn't this be a happy world if each creature in it could do what would make it happiest?

Orson: Why, that was the case once in a garden.

Duchess: Yes, where the roses were thornless, and no discords marred life's harmony. Orson, why are you so happy?

Orson: Me? Well, it is a pleasure to me to be head keeper like my father was. I like to know the Duke trusts me. I am happy when I work. I am very happy when I think of the little home Jacynth and I will have sometime.

Duchess (enviously): You have a great many things to make you happy, while I—but I am going to walk in the woods now, and I shall be happy. Does it make you glad to see the early morning light slanting through the leaves? I am always happy in the woods.

Orson: May I suggest something to you, my lady?

Duchess: Certainly.

Orson: If you will not think me impertinent. You see, I have known the Duke longer than you have known him.

Duchess: Yes.

Orson: If Berold had done exactly as the Duke wished, he would not have beaten him.

Duchess: Thank you, Orson. I understand. Berold only wanted to be free. I fancy we could both be happy if we were only understood.

Orson (kindly): Can't you make yourself happy, my lady?

Duchess (more brightly): Almost. I am going to try. You will bathe his eyes, won't you? I will come in the morning to see if he is any better. Don't you think he likes to have me?

Orson: I am sure of it, my lady.

Duchess: Then I will come. Good-by, Orson. (The sun is just rising.) I'll ride away to the woods on this first sunbeam.

Orson: Good-by, my lady. (Exit *Duchess*.) Poor little Duchess. (He opens the stable door as the curtain falls.)

SCENE 2

(The scene of the play is the breakfast room of Dangel Castle two hours later than Scene 1. The *Duke of Dangel* is walking with nervous, impatient movements up and down the stage, when the *Dowager Duchess* enters.)

D. Duchess: Jacynth says she has not been in her room for two hours.

Duke: Did she tell Jacynth where she was going?

D. Duchess: No, but Jacynth saw her go toward the stables. (Ironically) A visit to the stables before breakfast is the medieval custom for a Duchess, I suppose.

Duke (frowning): She will not repeat it; therefore it cannot be called a custom.

D. Duchess: Then her visits to the kennels are a custom, since she goes three times each day.

Duke: I permitted her, as you know, to do those things at first. I expected her to come gradually to an understanding of her position.

D. Duchess: The process is gradual at least. Do you know where I found her yesterday?

Duke: Where?

D. Duchess: Pulling weeds out of a celery bed. I asked her if she didn't know that there were two or three gardeners employed for that purpose.

Duke: What did she say?

D. Duchess: She said she wanted to work. I think she should have been a kitchen maid, Hermann. I told you you would be reckoning with unknown blood.

Duke: The blood does not flow that I cannot tame.

D. Duchess: Well said! I can help you. I could have soon put her down.

Duke: Where was she yesterday when Lady Carstairs called?

D. Duchess: I think she had gone to talk to that whining old Lena Engleking.

(The voice of the *Duchess* is heard off stage.)

Duchess: Oh! Jacynth, may I take them in?

Jacynth: If you wish, my lady.

(The *Duchess*, flushed with exercise, enters, carrying the flowers for the breakfast room.)

Duchess: Good morning. I was just in time to bring in the flowers.

Duke: May I ask why you are so late?

Duchess: Am I late? I have been in the woods.

Duke: Ever since you left the house?

Duchess: No, my lord, I went to the stables first.

Duke: What induced you to go there?

Duchess: I went to see Red Berold.

Duke (sneeringly): To weep tears of sympathy over him, I suppose.

Duchess: Jacynth said last night that Orson was afraid—

Duke (harshly): Afraid of what?

Duchess: Afraid he was going to die.

Duke: Because of the punishment I gave him?

Duchess: Yes, my lord.

D. Duchess: Is it a custom of yours, Hermann, to accept criticism of your actions?

Duchess (hastily): I meant no criticism. I could not rest until I saw for myself how badly he was suffering.

Duke: Are you satisfied?

Duchess: He looks quite blind and broken.

Duke (grimly): He must acknowledge that I am his master.

Duchess: Was it necessary to be so—so severe?

D. Duchess: What was the medieval custom, Hermann?

Duke: You will keep away from the stables in the future.

Duchess: Oh, but I like— (Meekly) Very well, my lord. I promised Orson—

Duke: I thoroughly disapprove of your intimacy with the servants.

Duchess: Intimacy?

Duke: Yes. You talk continually to Orson and to Jacynth, to the housekeeper and to any other servant you happen to fancy.

Duchess: They—are very kind to me.

Duke: A Duchess should understand her position better than to ask favors of a servant, as you did just now. You must cultivate dignity.

D. Duchess: If you have finished Jacynth's task, I will ring for breakfast.

Duchess (hurriedly placing the last flowers in the vase): I have done.

Duke: To be seen in the proper place at the proper time is what I expect of you.

Duchess (cowed): Yes, my lord. (Bell rings.)

SCENE 3

(The time is Autumn. The place is the dressing room of the *Duchess of Dangel*. We see, in addition, a hallway on the left and a balcony at the right. A latticed window overlooks the balcony. A bird cage containing a song bird is hanging in the window at center back. It seems incongruous with the massive, antique furnishings of the room.)

When the curtain rises, *Jacynth*, who is a bright, attractive maid, is discovered putting the room to rights. *Orson* appears on the balcony at the right and taps on the latticed window.)

Orson: *Jacynth*!

Jacynth (going to the window, lowering it): You had best not be tapping on my lady's window.

Orson: How am I to see you before I go to work if I don't tap?

Jacynth: Perhaps you don't need to see me?

Orson: But I want to. Is my lady going on the hunt tomorrow?

Jacynth: I don't know. Why?

Orson: She looks so pale. I think the ride would be good for her.

Jacynth: I don't know what the old Duchess would say.

Orson: Nothing, if it suits his Grace for my lady to go.
I'm thinking you may go yourself, *Jacynth*, if my lady does.

Jacynth: It is likely.

Orson: If you can, encourage her to go. I almost know from what the Duke said last night that he expects her to go.

Jacynth: Then she will need no encouragement from me.

Orson: No, perhaps not. Well, I must go. Just one kiss, my rosebud.

Jacynth: No, what have you done to deserve it? Well, there, you may kiss my hand like I was a great lady.

Orson: I'm glad you're not if this is the way they act. Good-by.

Jacynth: Good-by.

(*Jacynth* is still straightening the room when the *Duchess* enters.)

Duchess: Good morning, *Jacynth*.

Jacynth: Good morning, my lady.

(The *Duchess* seats herself and *Jacynth* brushes her hair.)

Jacynth (as the bird begins a melancholy chirping):
Listen to him, my lady. Do you know what he is saying?

Duchess: Yes, indeed, Jacynth. He says the sunshine has gone away over the hills, and he wants to follow it.

Jacynth (admiringly): Exactly. But I couldn't have told you.

Duchess: His wild brothers and sisters follow the summer. Perhaps they called a farewell to him in passing.

Jacynth: I wonder now if they did. Of course, then, he would be sad.

Duchess: How he would fly if he were free!

Jacynth: For the most part, he seems perfectly happy caged.

Duchess: Nothing is perfectly happy caged.
(The *Duchess* dismisses *Jacynth* as the *Duke* enters.)

Duchess: That will do, Jacynth. You may go.

Duke: I have a pleasure in store for you.

Duchess (incredulously): A pleasure?

Duke (nettled): Are pleasures, then, so rare in your life?

Duchess: Excuse my unfortunate manner. To what do you refer?

Duke (pompously): You understand the pride I take in reviving the customs of my ancestors.

Duchess: Yes, my lord.

Duke: I thought in this revival of a hunting party there should be some means of including you. (The *Duchess* bows.) There are none on record, but Darnly remembers to have heard of a custom which was in vogue during the Black Duke's reign four centuries ago. The Lady of the Castle rode forth on a jennet, and assisted at the disemboweling of the game by washing the hands of her liege in an ewer.

Duchess: Do you intend that I—?

Duke: Yes, you may perform that service for me to-morrow.

Duchess (languidly, scarcely lifting her long dark lashes): You are very kind, but I beg to decline.

Duke: Decline! Why, everything is in readiness. The ewer is polished, and—

Duchess: If my health is of any importance to you, my lord, you will not urge me to go.

Duke: Health! The ride will do you good. I have selected your mount myself, black barred, cream-coated, and pink eye-balled.

Duchess: I am sorry, but I feel that I must decline.

Duke: I desire you to go and that is sufficient.

Duchess (with a flash of her former spirit): I decline your invitation, and that is sufficient.

(The *Duke* looks at her in silent astonishment. He leaves the room abruptly and returns almost immediately with the *Dowager Duchess*.)

D. Duchess (in a tone of ironic enjoyment): So you refuse to conform to the medieval custom?

Duchess: My health, my lady, requires me to stay indoors.

D. Duchess: Nonsense! You are spoiled and obstinate. I told you, Hermann, how she would be.

Duke: It is time you understood your situation. I have waited long enough to explain it.

Duchess: My situation? My unhappy situation? Can it be explained?

D. Duchess: Have you ever wondered why Hermann married you?

Duchess: Why? (Blankly.) His reason? Your reason for marrying me?

D. Duchess: He did so against my wishes.

Duchess (with spirit): His reason does not interest me. The Mother Superior said it was my duty to marry him. It was not for me to question her decision.

D. Duchess (to the *Duke*): Shall I tell her, Hermann, that you married her according to the custom of your ancestors?

Duchess: I fail to understand you.

D. Duchess (explaining with enjoyment): Hermann desired perfect obedience in a wife; so he chose you.

Duchess (proudly): Your choice, my lord, might have been wiser.

Duke: I may add that I chose you because you are absolutely alone in the world, and because (deliberately) you have no choice but to obey my will.

Duchess: Obey you contrary to my own opinion?

D. Duchess: You may as well realize that your opinion is absolutely worthless.

Duchess: It is of value to me, my lady.

Duke: Understand this, I am the master of my castle and of its inmates. No more need be said.

D. Duchess: You, you actually oppose the Duke of Dangel?

Duchess: I have wanted nothing but to be happy.

Duke: Your obstinacy has prevented you. I merely insist upon obedience. Do as I wish, and you will be happy enough.

D. Duchess: I advise you to think the situation over. When you realize how utterly helpless you are, you will change your behavior.

Duke: We need not refer to this again. You will be ready for the hunt tomorrow.

D. Duchess: The custom must be upheld. (Exeunt *Duke* and *Dowager Duchess*. The *Duchess* buries her face in her hands as the curtain falls.)

ACT III

SCENE 1

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

(The time of the play is the morning following the preceding scene. The *Duke* is discovered dressed for the hunt, standing before the castle gates. He is idly flecking his whip at the dogs which fawn around his feet. The *Dowager Duchess* comes through the gate.)

D. Duchess: She absolutely refuses to go. She insists that she is ill.

Duke: She does it to spite me.

D. Duchess (maliciously): How contrary to custom! You seem unsuccessful, Hermann, in receiving implicit obedience.

Duke (haughtily): Another time she will do as I wish.

D. Duchess: That remains to be seen.

Duke: See to it that she keeps her room. Set Jacynth to guard her door.

D. Duchess: As you wish, my dear Hermann. Your orders shall be obeyed. (Exit.)

(A snatch of rollicking gypsy music is heard off stage. A troop of gypsies, carrying the usual paraphernalia, cross the stage. One old crone, bent half double, detaches herself from the group and approaches the *Duke*. She holds out her hand, saying in a level whine):

Gypsy: This dog whistle is cheap. I've made it for you. Only a little money will buy it. (The *Duke* shakes his head.) It is cheap. Here is a porcelain mouthpiece to screw on a pipe end. Your Grace cannot do without it. A poor gypsy does not ask much. A beautiful piece. How can poor gypsies live if the lords will not buy? Let me tell your fortune. I will tell your fortune for one piece of gold. Your Grace would like to know what is going to happen. Much will come to pass. A gypsy can tell you the secrets of the future for a very little gold. (The *Duke* shakes his head, contemptuously.) I have come to pay my respects to the beautiful new Duchess if it please your Grace.

Duke (suddenly, with an evil smile): She is ill, could you cure her?

Gypsy: Oh, yes, my lord. What is her disease?

Duke: Youth and obstinacy.

Gypsy (keenly): She does not do as my lord wishes?

Duke: She pretends she is sick. She is a baby. She needs weaning. A taste of life and sorrow would be good for her.

Gypsy: What does my lord desire?

Duke: She must do as I wish.

Gypsy: Yes. Would it please your Grace if she was too frightened to be sick again?

Duke: You will receive gold for it. She is forward and ungrateful.

(A hunting horn is heard off stage.)

Gypsy: Leave her to me. She will be afraid to be sick again. Afraid for her very life.

(The *Duke* silences her as *Orson* enters.)

Orson: The horses are ready, your Grace.

Duke: Very well. (A second horn sounds.) *Orson*, the *Duchess* is ill. Take this gypsy woman to her room, and set her to telling a good gypsy story. She can while away the time for the *Duchess* until our return.

(Exeunt *Gypsy* and *Orson*. The *Duke* looks after them with a sinister, satisfied smile. Horns sound, dogs bark. The *Duke* starts off left as the curtain falls.)

SCENE 2

(The scene is the dressing room of the *Duchess* as in Act II, Scene 3. When the curtain rises, *Jacynth* is seen at the left, sitting in the hallway with her head against the door of the *Duchess*' room. She is asleep. *Orson* is by the latticed window in the balcony. He is looking into the room as though absorbed in the scene before him.

The gypsy in a low chair in the center of the room is sitting as erect as a queen on her throne. She is speaking and in her voice is all the music of the "Pipes o' Pan." The *Duchess*, with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, is seated at the gypsy's feet, drinking in her words as though they were life itself.)

Gypsy: We will follow the patteran, which will lead us to the best life can offer. The journey will be your probation. When it is ended, I will place you in the midst of my tribe, and describe how you have borne the long and terrible trials. We know our kind. My people will not deny you when I trace for them these veins (placing her fingers on the *Duchess*' brow) which meet and part making our rapid "mystic mark." Neither will you deny us, for gypsy heart reaches out after gypsy heart as surely as the full moon draws the tides, or the red sun calls to the sleeping buds in the springtime.

I will bid my people prove and probe each eye's profound and glorious globe till they detect the kindred spark in those depths so dear and dark, like spots that snap and burst and flee, circling over the midnight sea.

Duchess (fascinated): Perhaps I do belong to you. I do not know who my parents were.

Gypsy: We care not. Blood of our blood flows through your veins—to send you roaming through the green with us, and walking in the magic of the forest.

Duchess: Perhaps it has been urging me all these years, and I did not understand. Am I strong enough to endure the trials?

Gypsy: Yes. If that brow is true and those eyes are sure. Trial after trial past, the gorgio life forgotten, you will fall into our arms at last breathless with the thrill of the great deliverance.

Duchess: Deliverance! Yes, it would be that. But how am I fitted to follow your life?

Gypsy: You are fitted to adore,
To give your wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway.
I foresee and could foretell
Your future portion sure and well.
But those passionate eyes speak true,
Speak true.
Let them say what you will do.

Duchess: But if I should fail to stand the tests?

Gypsy: You may be sure your daily life
In its peace or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved;
We pursue your whole career,
And hope for it nor doubt nor fear.

Duchess: And if I make mistakes?

Gypsy: We are beside you in all of your ways
With our blame, with our praise,
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
Glad, angry, but indifferent,—No!

Duchess: My heart leaps up. It is singing to me, if I knew—

Gypsy: You shall know.
Our arms once curled about you,
What we knew before,
That love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,

Or brain devise or hand approve!
Stand up, look below.
It is our life at your feet we throw,
To step with into light and joy.

(The *Gypsy* rises, and holds out her hand to the *Duchess*.)

Come, let us go together, let us follow the pateran, over the morning hills and through the twilight valleys. Under the lordly skies we will go our ways, glad to live and glad to die, laughing and free, living and loving. We offer you life and love. (The *Duchess* suddenly springs to her feet. She runs to a closet, and seizes a riding habit.)

Duchess: I will go. Oh, to be free! Jacynth! Free of customs, of coldness and criticism! Jacynth!

Gypsy: I will help you if you need; Jacynth sleeps as I decreed.

Duchess: Free to race through the hawthorn lanes, to sit by the camp fire—to dance—to sing—to live—! (Orson rubs his eyes dazedly, and steals from the balcony as the curtain falls.)

SCENE 3

(The scene is the same as Act II, Scene 1. Orson enters hastily and drops down on one of the benches before the stable door. He rubs his eyes from time to time as though dazed. The *Duchess* and the *Gypsy* enter.)

Duchess: I am like the birds, Orson. I am going to follow the summer.

Orson: My lady!

Duchess (radiantly): Yes, follow the summer and be happy! Happy! Happy as the birds themselves.

Orson: God grant you may be!

Duchess: Thank you, Orson.

Orson: You must know that I am your servant to live or to die.

Duchess: Orson!

Orson: Let me go with you, my lady. Let me serve you wherever you go.

Duchess: How kind you are! But I cannot permit you to leave Jacynth and your duties here for me.

Orson: I would dance on hot ploughshares to serve you.

Duchess: I believe you.

Orson: Never forget that I am in readiness if ever God pleases that you need me.

Duchess (touched): I'll not forget.

Orson: I'll get your horse.

Duchess (drawing a plait of hair from her bosom):
Keep this as a token of my esteem.

Orson: I shall wear it on my breast till the Day of Judgment.

Duchess: I hope to see you before that time. When you are released here, will you come to me?

Orson: Then, or when you will. I will saddle your mount, my lady.

(Exit through door.)

Duchess (gazing off into space, stretching her arms, as though to herself): I will follow the patteran. I will take "the wings of the morning."

ACT IV

SCENE 1

THE GYPSY QUEEN

(The time is April. The place is a flowery dingle with moss-covered knoll at center back. When the curtain rises, the *Duchess*, dressed in a gypsy costume, is seen sitting on the knoll. She seems to be listening to the birds sing. Presently she rises and begins to dance. She hums as she dances and soon the words of her song become audible. She sings simply.)

Duchess: Joyfully I dance in the golden noon,
The golden April noon;
Oh, birds that fly,
That flit and fly,
Ye are not so free as I.

Happily I race with the merry moon,
The merry midnight moon;
Oh, clouds on high
That sail the sky,
Ye are not so free as I.

(A gypsy man enters from the left. He has an intelligent forehead, dark eyes, well shaped lips, and a graceful, muscular body. He steps forward as though he would join the *Duchess* in her dance. She eludes him and seats herself on the knoll. He sits beside her.)

Gypsy: Did you find the roses I dropped for you?

Duchess: At the turning of the patteran I found two red roses.

Gypsy: Did you read their message?

Duchess: I—I don't know.

Gypsy: You did. Your heart could not mistake it. Your eyes say you understood. Your cheeks answer like a blood Romany.

Duchess: How good it is to live.

Gypsy: Yes, to live and love.

Duchess: Oh yes, to love the grass that bends, the trees that toss the white clouds on and on, the rain that—

Gypsy: And a poor gypsy man.

Duchess: I did not say so.

Gypsy: But you meant it. Make the sunlight dance for me once more.

Duchess: Could I do that?

Gypsy: You alone possess the magic. I say to myself, "She is a gorgio. She will never love a gypsy man." Then the sunbeams stand still on the tree tops.

Duchess: Poor gypsy man.

Gypsy: I say, "She is at heart a blood Romany. She loves me." Straightway the winds are laughing, and I walk down a rainbow trail.

Duchess: But I was born a gorgio. I am the wife of a—

Gypsy: Never in truth! You were once held in a cruel enchantment, but now you are free.

Duchess: I am free, and yet I am bound.

Gypsy: Only because you refuse to break the spell. You fail to understand the shining great truth because you are blinded by a partial truth.

Duchess: What truth do I fail to understand?

Gypsy: That the law which transcends all other laws is the law of love. Your heart to my heart, the world to enjoy—.

(There is heard off stage a confused murmur of voices. Two gypsy men enter, carrying the aged queen of the gypsies. The *Duchess* and her lover start to their feet. The *Duchess* is astonished. The men place their burden on the knoll. The members of the tribe fill the stage.)

Queen (slowly): Death is—sweeter—in the open. (The women sob.) Do not weep, let my death be as I planned it—glad as life. (After a time.) Sing the song I taught you.

(The members of the tribe sing and dance to a weird, stirring melody.)

Death! Death!

We dance to greet thee,

Down the long, long patteran.

While the gypsy trail winds on,

And the gypsy heart beats strong,

Lo, brave and bold we meet thee,

Nor fear thy sting.

Our life was gay,

Thy bitter sting,

Thou hast thy day,

Death! Death!

(The *Duchess* kneels by the dying queen, unable to repress her sobs.)

Queen (kindly): Why do you weep? Life was good—
I am ready—to pay.

Duchess: You have been so kind to me!

Queen: We know our kind. Like the prisoned bird you
were pining. We offered you life. Did I speak
truly? Was it life we offered you?

Duchess: It was life—and—and—

Queen: And love? (Eagerly.) Say, was it love?

Duchess: Such love as I have never known.

Queen (triumphantly): We know our kind. Shall you
leave my people when I am gone?

Duchess: Does the freed bird seek its cage?

Queen: I want—you to take my place, to be the leader of my people.

Duchess (simply): I will try to serve them.

Queen (to the tribe)): Follow her as you have followed me. Gypsy heart after gypsy heart, over the trail, glad and free.

(The *Queen* is silent. Her eyes are closed. Suddenly she looks at the *Duchess* and speaks imperiously.) Dance our Spring dance.

(The *Duchess* rises hesitantly.)

Gypsy Lover: Dance for her, my Queen.

(Under the fire of those dying eyes, slowly as the first flushing of the morning skies, the *Duchess* begins to dance. Imperceptibly as a rose unfurls, her motions quicken. Soon she dances with “the first fine, careless rapture” of a chaffinch, “singing on an orchard bough.”

The gypsies standing around, the dying figure on the knoll, all are forgotten. She feels only the joy of living. She sees only the compelling eyes of her gypsy lover. In the background, the aged *Queen* silently and bravely pays in one moment “all glad life’s arrears.” The gypsies kneel reverently in the foreground, the new Queen dances forward into the arms of her lover.)

Duchess (clinging to him): It is true, she taught the truth.

Gypsy Lover: What, my heart?

Duchess: “Love is the only good in the world.”

EPILOGUE

(The time is many years later; the scene is a lane between hedgerows. An old thief and son of Lucifer, an aged gypsy man, is sitting in the shade. He is sun-burned all over like an Æthiop, and his forehead is chapleted green with wreathy hop.)

(*Orson*, white haired, but strong and erect, enters. He is carrying a staff shaped like a javelin. In his left hand is a well-filled wine bag.)

Orson: Good afternoon, gypsy. May I rest in the shade with you?

Gypsy: The shade is free to bird and man.

Orson (seating himself): True! Do the gypsies camp near?

Gypsy: Around the curve in the patteran.

Orson: You gypsies are a strange folk. (Pouring wine into a tin cup.) Will you drink with me?

Gypsy: That I will. (Drinks.) What wine is this?

Orson: We call it "Cotnar."

Gypsy: It's the springtime, bud and bloom.

Orson: You can't find better; it is as old as the time of the Druids.

Gypsy: A little more, and I could follow the trail as I used to do. Have you more, good Sir?

Orson: No, but here is enough to give your heart and soul a stir up.

Gypsy: It makes me think of my gypsy lass running down the trail with me.

Orson: It'll give your life's hour glass a shake when the sand doubts whether to run on or to stop short!

Gypsy (eyeing the bag curiously): That is a fine bag. It never came from near here.

Orson: You are right. It came from the Duke's own cellar.

Gypsy: The Duke of Dangel!

Orson: The same. You knew he was dead, perhaps?

Gypsy: No. The old, yellow Duchess is dead too? She used to rate us when we passed. Her tongue was a frost, a biting frost.

Orson: A bad time enough we had of it between the Duke and her after the little Duchess joined your tribe.

Gypsy (drinking): Well, they are gone now, and we drink their wine. "Cotnar," did you say?

Orson: Yes. (Musingly.) My wife and babies, too—all gone the way of the roses.

Gypsy: It is the way of life. Yesterday I was a lad with my ear pressed close to the earth to feel the thunder. I kept pace with the winds themselves as I followed our Queen over the hills and by the sea. Those days are gone as all things go in the end—birds and flowers, tribes and queens.

Orson: Yes. Did you ever know what fortune attended the little lady your Queen befriended?

Gypsy: "The little lady?" There could be but one; so made in a piece of nature's madness. Too small, almost for the life and gladness that over-filled her. It is she you mean, who fled from the Duke's prison into the sunshine? You knew her?

Orson: Yes. I was the man the Duke spoke to. I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke.

Gypsy: She was our Queen in time. We heaped the crimson roses for her throne. She was active, stirring, all afire, could not rest, could not tire. To a stone she might have given life! She was our April morning, and we followed her.

Orson: So she was—an April morning.

Gypsy (softly): She will never race between the hedge-rows again. She, too, has gone "the way of the roses."

Orson (much affected by the news of the *Duchess*' death): Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw too hard, I say, for my explaining.
(He secretly empties the contents of a vial into a tin cup, and pours in some Cotnar.)

Gypsy (rising): Come to the camp with me. We will make you welcome.

Orson: Thank you. I have found a snug corner under the hedge here. I'll turn myself around and bid the world good-night. After that—

Gypsy: You will come?

Orson: Yes, when the trumpet's blowing wakes me.

(The *Gypsy* goes off the stage, and the curtain falls, as *Orson* composes himself for sleep.)

MY LAST DUCHESS

MY LAST DUCHESS

SCENE 1

(The scene of the play is Ferrara, in North Italy. The play opens in a garden near the castle of the *Duke of Este*.)

The *Duchess of Este* is seated near a replica of the beautiful bronze "David" which Donatello designed for Cosimo de Medici. In the background is a statue of Neptune taming a sea horse.

The *Duchess* is, probably, twenty-two years of age. She is slender and of medium height. Her hair is dark, with a warm bronze tint. She is wearing a green velvet gown with cream-colored lace at the neck. A lace mantle is around her shoulders.

When the curtain rises, she is sitting as though she were in a reverie, tapping her foot absent-mindedly.

The *Duke of Este* passes along a garden walk at the back of the stage, and disappears into the shrubbery. Presently, he enters from the left carrying a corsage bouquet of pale yellow roses.

The *Duke* is forty years old. He is tall, with a haughty carriage of the head and shoulders, which makes him seem even taller than he really is. His eyes are cold and searching. His face would appear impassive were it not for the look of extreme pride which is its habitual expression.

He presents the flowers to the *Duchess*. She fastens them to her bodice.)

Duke: Fra Pandolf is unpacking his easel.

Duchess: I am ready.

Duke: He will be here soon. I wish to show him through the East Gallery before he begins painting.

Duchess (regretfully): Then I might as well have gone into the orchard with Gaetano.

Duke: Gaetano?

Duchess: He wanted me to go.

Duke: The Duchess of Este should know better how to choose her friends.

Duchess (a hurt expression in her eyes): I am sorry, my lord, if my choice of friends does not meet with your approval.

Duke: Learn the disgraceful history of Gaetano's parentage, and you will understand the cause of my disapproval.

Duchess: Pardon me, but it is because I heard his pitiful story that I became interested in him.

Duke: How came you to hear his story, may I ask?

Duchess: Father Caponsacchi told it to me.

Duke: May I ask why?

Duchess (innocently): I asked him.

Duke (coldly): Which would seem to betray a previous interest in the subject of the story.

Duchess: Oh—I had seen . . .

Duke (haughtily): Excuse me. (He bows and goes out right. He crosses the stage at the back, presently, and passes out at the left back.)

(The *Duchess* rises and walks restlessly back and forth. Her countenance lights up as *Gaetano* enters. *Gaetano* is eighteen, rather mature for his years, yet with an engaging boyishness of demeanor. He is dark, eager, and extremely handsome. He smiles gaily, and holds out a bough of cherries toward the *Duchess*.)

Duchess (smiling, reaching out her hand for the fruit): For me, *Gaetano*? Did you break them for me?

Gaetano (expressively): From the very heart of the orchard, for you.

Duchess (seating herself): They are so red. (Admiringly) The great sun has given them of his fire.

Gaetano (sitting beside her): Yes, they are red, but (jealously, observing the *Duke's* favor) they are not redder than the roses I shall bring you when the dew is on them.

Duchess: You are so good to me, *Gaetano*. (Yearningly) I wish my little son had lived to be as kind to me, when I am old.

Gaetano (sympathetically): Fate has been unkind to both of us. Unkinder to me than to you. Your baby died a natural death. Think what I must suffer when I recall the revolting murder of my mother. My poor little mother—stabbed brutally twenty-two times, five deadly, while I slept, no

doubt, and the moon shone calmly over Italy. (In a tone of keenest sorrow) Twenty-two dagger wounds, by my father's wish, in her sweet, white body!

Duchess: Your father, Guido, has paid the penalty for his crime. You were an infant; you could do nothing to prevent it. You should not grieve endlessly over the tragedy. Pompilia is at rest now. She would be proud of her son if she were living.

Gaetano: Only two weeks—two short weeks was all the time she had in which to love me. (In an awed tone) I dreamed of her last night. She was standing dressed in white, with red roses at her breast.

Duchess: It is because of your recent knowledge of the tragedy that you suffer, now, so keenly. Time will do much to blunt the edge of your grief.

Gaetano: To think—I have lived all of these years without knowing the truth—

Duchess: It was better for you not to know. Father Caponsacchi would have kept it from you longer if he could have done so.

Gaetano: I know it. He did right to tell me the whole story, though, after I overheard part of it.

Duchess: Yes, you could bear the story better from his kind lips, but you are young, Gaetano, to assume the burden of sorrow which seems to be each one's portion.

Gaetano: You, too, are unhappy. (Passionately) I would die to make you happy, and he will not even smile.

Duchess: Hush—you must not talk in that way. I am not unhappy. His Grace does not understand me. It is my fault.

Gaetano: He does not feel. He is cold as that bronze “David.”

Duchess: Let us speak of something else.

Gaetano: Forgive me. (To change the conversation) Did I tell you that Father Caponsacchi wants to send me to Rome to complete my education?

Duchess: Did you agree to go?

Gaetano (eagerly): Would my going please you?

Duchess: Would you go to please me?

Gaetano (simply): I would do anything to please you.

Duchess (impulsively, taking his hand): Then become the great, good man which you are capable of becoming.

(The *Duke* appears in the walk at the back of the stage. He is accompanied by *Fra Pandolf*. The *Duchess*, in some confusion, withdraws her hand from *Gaetano's* as they enter. She greets *Fra Pandolf*.)

Duke: *Fra Pandolf* is ready to begin painting.

Duchess: I, too, am ready. (To *Fra Pandolf*) Where shall I place myself?

Fra Pandolf (looking around): Over there, where you were sitting.

(The *Duchess* seats herself. *Fra Pandolf* proceeds to adjust his easel, and to mix his paints.)

Duchess (smiling toward *Gaetano*, but speaking to the *Duke*): *Gaetano* was just telling me that he is going to Rome to study.

(The *Duke* bows, but makes no comment. The *Duchess* tries again. She holds up the bough of cherries.) Are not these cherries beautiful? *Gaetano* gathered them for me.

Duke: They spoil your roses.

Duchess: Oh, they were not intended for adornment.

Fra Pandolf: I disdain to paint them, your Grace. Their color is not comparable to that in my lady's cheeks.

(The *Duke* bows with the utmost haughtiness in acknowledgment of this compliment to his *Duchess*. The *Duchess* looks unhappy. *Gaetano's* eyes flash. He walks up to the *Duchess* and says in a low tone):

Gaetano: May I bring your roses after the dew falls?

Duchess (shaking his hand, kindly): Yes. Good-by, *Gaetano*.

(He bows to the *Duke*. Exit.)

Fra Pandolf: I can finish the portrait today if this light holds. (He studies the *Duchess* for a moment.) That is good, but my lady's mantle laps over her wrist too much.

(The *Duchess* smiles, and rearranges her mantle. The *Duke* looks on, his attitude indicative of displeasure.)

Fra Pandolf (talking as he works): I could paint the cherries more easily. Paint must never hope to reproduce the faint half flush that dies along the throat.

(The *Duchess* blushes, but makes no comment.)

Duke: I leave you to your painting. (He bows to the *Duchess*, and walks off right as the curtain falls.)

SCENE 2

(The scene is the same. "The moon is pouring a flood of poetry from heaven to earth." In the shrubbery a nightingale is singing.)

The *Duchess* is seen, walking slowly along the path at the back of the stage. She enters from the right, and continues to stroll, restlessly, back and forth. She is dressed in white, with a filmy scarf around her shoulders. She pauses by the bronze statue, and apparently listens to the nightingale.)

Duchess (placing her hand on the statue): Oh, David, I, too, used to sing. (Musingly) Not like that bird, more like a speckled-breasted bird I heard one morning in an English wood. (After a pause) How I envy you, David. You do not feel. You are indifferent, alike, to the rising of the moon, to the circling of the stars. (She leans silently against the statue until *Gaetano* enters.)

Gaetano: I have brought the roses, my lady. (Handing them to her, boyishly) Do you see the dew on them?

Duchess: Like pearls in the moonlight. How very beautiful they are. Here is one for you, Gaetano.

Gaetano: I will treasure it always. It shall be my talisman when I go away to Rome.

Duchess: I shall be lonely when you are gone.

Gaetano: Then I will stay.

Duchess: No, no. I desire you to go. Perhaps you may learn how good life can be if we live it rightly. Pompilia would have wanted you to go. I want you to develop into the kind of man I once hoped my little son would become.

Gaetano: I will do my best, my lady.

Duchess: I have faith in you, Gaetano.

Gaetano: I should not hesitate to go if . . .

Duchess: If what?

Gaetano: If you were happy. I saw how he looked today. (Wrathfully) If he would only say something—I saw how he made you feel.

Duchess: Oh hush, Gaetano, you must not talk in that way. You did not see my portrait after it was finished.

Gaetano: It could not be so beautiful as you.

Duchess: You flatter me. I never looked one-half so well.

(The *Duke* appears at the back of the stage. He pauses a moment and then goes out left.)

Gaetano (simply): You are more beautiful to me than the noontide when it is most splendid.

Duchess (striving to speak lightly): What a pretty speech, Gaetano. What would Father Caponsacchi say?

Gaetano (in a hurt tone): He would know I was sincere in what I said. He knows that, having no mother to love, I love you.

Duchess: Forgive me. I did not mean to hurt you. Let us talk of your studies at Rome.

Gaetano: What would my mother have wanted me to study, do you think?

Duchess: Whatever would help you to be good and to enjoy life.

(A servant enters with two glasses of wine on a tray.)

Duchess: I did not order this.

Servant: His Grace commanded me to bring it to you, my lady.
(Exit Servant.)

Duchess (pleased): You see, Gaetano, he is often much kinder to me than you think. (*Gaetano* petulantly refuses the wine which she offers. He continues talking as she drinks a glass of it.)

Gaetano: You are right. My mother would want me to be good because she was good. She would want me to be happy because she never was. She did not live long enough to be happy, only seventeen years and five months old when she died. (His old thought recurring to him, his voice again expressing the pain the thought brings him.) Stabbed twenty-two times by my father's orders, while she reached her little helpless hands up, perhaps, to ward off the blows.

Duchess (tenderly): Do not think of it, *Gaetano*.

(She rises impulsively to go to him, but pauses as he says suddenly in an awe-struck voice):

Gaetano: You look as I dreamed my mother did, dressed in white with red roses at her breast.

Duchess (starting forward again): Then I will be your mother, this once, *Gaetano*. I will kiss you as *Pompilia* would do.

(She pauses suddenly, clutches her hands to her breast, sways unsteadily a moment, then like a severed rose, she falls and lies face downward, dead, in the moonlight.

For a horrified moment, *Gaetano* is motionless. Then kneeling beside her, he turns her face upward and searches vainly for some sign of life. Calmly, he rises and inspects the remaining glass of wine. Kneeling again by the body of the *Duchess*, he gazes fixedly at the beautiful dead face. Suddenly, with a gesture of infinite grief, he buries his

face in the crushed red roses he had gathered when the dew was on them.

The *Duke* is seen on the walk at the back, surveying the scene apparently without emotion, as he moves toward the right. The stage is darkened, gradually, completely.)

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

(There is a fireplace at center back. On either side of it is a built-in bookcase, extending a third of the way to the ceiling. The cases are full of books. Over the mantle is hung Martini's interpretation of Poe's *Berenice*. In a similar position on the right wall is a haunting picture of "The City of Dreadful Night." A violin case is leaning against a music cabinet at the left of the stage. On the cabinet is a bust of George Sand. A library table is placed at the right center with a chair beside it. There are books, magazines, and a student's reading-lamp on the table. The floor is bare of carpet or rugs. The room contains little other furnishing except a rocking-chair and a foot-stool near the fireplace. A closet door is at front right, and doors at front and left back. When the curtain rises, there is a fire in the grate and the sound of a rain storm off stage. The storm gradually dies away as the play proceeds. Lightning flashes through the window at the right. Shortly after the curtain rises, *Allesandro* enters from the left door. He is tall and dark, with an aquiline nose and sensitive lips. He has the look of a dreamer and of an idealist. Crossing the stage toward the closet on the right, he removes his wet coat and hat, opens the closet door and hangs the wet garments inside. He slips on a house coat and goes to the fireplace where he pauses for a few minutes. After a time he walks to the music cabinet, takes up the

violin, goes back by the fireplace, looks towards the window, and begins to play. He plays a few measures from Schubert's "Serenade." Then he sings softly to himself as he puts the violin back into its case: "Sadly in the forest mourning"—"Wails the whip-poor-will"—"And my heart for thee is yearning"—He seats himself by the table, and takes up a copy of Leonid Andreyeff's "The Black Maskers." He has not yet begun to read when the door at the left opens hastily and *Porphyria* enters. She is exceedingly beautiful, with dark blue eyes and an abundance of golden hair. She is dressed in a ball costume, with a dark mantle flung around her shoulders. *Allesandro* springs to his feet in astonishment. She looks at him and laughs uncertainly.)

Porphyria: I left them dancing (nodding her head backwards) and came to you, *Allesandro*.
(*Allesandro* crosses quickly to her and puts his hand on her shoulder.)

Allesandro: You are wet. (Dazed.) You came through the rain to me?

Porphyria: I . . . we were driving in the park before we went to the ball and I heard a bird calling . . . and . . . I . . .

Allesandro (failing to catch her meaning): A bird?

Porphyria: Our bird, the one that sang in the orchard that first night.

Allesandro: Oh,—the whip-poor-will. I heard it, too, *Porphyria*, and it—but you are wet. How did you get here? What will your father think of this?

Porphyria: I snatched this mantle and ran here. Father will know nothing about it because I told my guest, the Countess Gismond, that I was ill and that I was going home. (Quickly, seeing a look of disapproval on his face) Don't blame me, Allesandro! I was ill. I heard the whip-poor-will . . . it . . . you don't know how I felt . . . All at once it seemed to me I should . . . I could not bear it any longer . . . so . . . I . . . (Breaking off and turning slightly away she begins to take off the mantle, which is dripping wet. *Allesandro* stands by, as though unable to collect himself. At last he says with intense feeling.)

Allesandro: You have come to me, *Porphyria*? Have you come to stay?

Porphyria: Yes, for an hour, perhaps. (Unable to bear the hurt look which meets her light words) Don't look so, please. It was not easy for me . . . to come.

Allesandro (contritely): Forgive me! I hardly know what I am doing . . . Your feet are wet. Come to the fire. (He leads her courteously to the fireplace and draws out the rocking-chair for her. She seats herself, hastily, on the low stool and motions for him to take the chair.)

Porphyria: Let me sit at your feet, *Allesandro* (drawing her stool to his feet as she speaks), and lean my head against you. Now, let us be happy. Tell me a story about a whip-poor-will. Yes, you may

stroke my hair if you wish. I desire it. I wish to be perfectly happy for one hour, one little hour.

Allesandro (suddenly): Porphyria, may I ask you a question?

Porphyria: If you wish.

Allesandro: Did something unusual happen today? Something which made you very unhappy?

Porphyria (evasively): Why? What put such a question into your mind?

Allesandro: I know something has moved you deeply. I am miserable when you are unhappy. Tell me what has troubled you.

Porphyria: I . . . had not meant to trouble you; but of course you wonder why I came. I should not have come . . . I think . . . had I not heard the whip-poor-will . . . but after that . . . and after what had happened today . . . The Duke came this morning and looked at me for an hour with his horrible, cold eyes, while he talked to Father, while he flattered Father, rather, about his art collection. Nobody knows how his last Duchess died. I think . . . don't laugh at me, Allesandro, I think he froze that lovely lady to death with his awful stare. (Shuddering) He was at the ball tonight and I was forced to dance with him. All the time I kept thinking of you and I kept hearing the whip-poor-will as it sang in the orchard that first night. I had a queer fancy (looking at him childishly) that if the Duchess had loved our bird,

or any bird, he would have taken it into his hand and would have crushed it to death with the greatest pleasure. I could hardly finish my dance with him. He asked for a second. Father was standing by; so I could not refuse, but (suddenly calming down) we didn't dance it after all. I came to you instead, Allesandro.

Allesandro: Will you promise me something, Porphyria?

Porphyria: If I can.

Allesandro: Should your father attempt to force you into a marriage with that monster, promise me that you will come to me.

Porphyria (passionately): Oh, I wish I knew that I would come to you in a way worthy of you. I wish I were not so cowardly. If I had the courage of a sparrow, I'd make both our lives worth something, but I haven't it—the courage, I mean. I hate poverty. I could never be happy. I'm afraid to come to you. I would be but a weight to drag you down. Your dreams would die and I should be the cause of their death. Could I bear to kill your dreams, Allesandro? I wish I knew what I shall do. I'm afraid that after all—I may be cowardly enough to come to you and if I do—I know I cannot come bravely.

Allesandro: I fear only that you will never come. I somehow feel that you never will. Porphyria, don't you understand that you are the most beautiful dream I ever had? That the mere thought of

losing you blots all other hopes from my mind with an unutterable darkness. I am miserable till I have your promise.

Porphyria: Then I promise you that I will come, Allesandro.

Allesandro (tenderly turning her face up towards his): And I promise to make you happy. We will not think of poverty. We will have infinite riches—we will have each other, and every year the Spring-time will come and our whip-poor-will singing in the orchard. But (catching himself up)—somehow—it isn't that I distrust your promise, but—(the brightness going out of his voice) I'm afraid, *Porphyria*.

Porphyria (stretching her feet towards the fire and settling her head back against his knees, says coaxingly): Let's not think any longer about what may happen. I only ask for one hour in which to be happy. Tell me my story, Allesandro.

Allesandro (stroking her hair): Poor little wet bird. Are you happy now?

Porphyria: Utterly.

Allesandro (groaning): If it could only last. And you came through the rain to me, *Porphyria*. I shall never forget it.

Porphyria (catching her breath sharply at his tone): Don't talk so, Allesandro. I . . . You don't know how I felt . . . I can't stand much more. (Reproachfully) How can I be happy when I . . . when you are so sad?

Allesandro (suddenly appreciating the fact that she has been under a strain as well as himself): Forgive me! (Humoring her.) I will tell you a story about a whip-poor-will.

Porphyria: Begin "Once upon a time—"

Allesandro: Very well. Once upon a time, in a country not so far away, there was a magic orchard. The moon and a fairy had bewitched it. A poor beggar . . .

Porphyria: Not a poor beggar, a prince in disguise.

Allesandro: Well, a prince in disguise, if your fancy insists upon a prince, was walking off a case of nerves and he stopped in a magic orchard to rest.

Porphyria (Nods sympathetically and pulls his hand down into hers): Why didn't he stop at a house?

Allesandro: He wanted to be out where he could smell the apple blooms, and dream, and listen to the night birds, and watch the clouds drift, and let his fancy soar.

Porphyria: But he didn't watch long.

Allesandro: No, he was so weary, you know, and it was a magic orchard. By some mysterious magic, he soon forgot his weariness in sleep. When he awoke, moon fairies were dancing madly on every apple bloom and a whip-poor-will was calling in the orchard.

Porphyria: Did it ever call any more?

Allesandro: Yes, it called every night and that was the signal . . . But I'm getting ahead of my story. The poor beggar, I mean the prince, opened his eyes. He thought he must be dreaming. He didn't know, then, that the orchard was enchanted. He thought he must be dreaming that he was Endymion, for, surely, Diana was standing before him.

Porphyria (laughingly): Diana in a gingham dress! The only one I ever wore, Allesandro,—that summer in the country. I have it yet. Tell me the rest.

(A man's face appears at the window. The lovers do not see him because they are facing the other way. The face disappears as *Allesandro* continues.)

Allesandro: The prince sat up and when he opened his eyes fully, he discovered that he was not dreaming, and that it was not Diana who was looking at him. Can you guess how he knew it was not she?

Porphyria: Tell me.

Allesandro: The fairy looking at him was far more beautiful than his dreams or than the goddess Diana. Her eyes were blue, Porphyria, as a June sky at midnight, with the golden light of the midnight stars shining in their depths. Her hair (stroking *Porphyria's* hair tenderly)—I could never tell you about her hair. All the moonbeams that ever grew weary of heaven found a resting place in her hair.

(There is heard a sudden, peculiar, double rap on the outer door. *Porphyria* starts up, looks excitedly around, sees the closet door, and rushes to it, saying):

Porphyria: Father! I'm not here, Allesandro. (The door at the left is flung open violently and the *Count* enters. He is a tall man, with blond hair and beard, rather handsome, and a trifle overbearing. He is a man who covets the culture which he does not possess. He is proud of his art collection, not for the sake of art, but because it betokens the culture which he desires, and because it is a possession not all people may have.)

Allesandro: To what do I owe this intrusion?

Count (sneeringly): You are at a great loss, no doubt, to account for it. I suppose you think I do not know my daughter's mantle (pointing to *Porphyria's* mantle).

Allesandro: So your idea of honor is to spy upon your own daughter, is it?

Count: If it is necessary to guard her honor, yes.

Allesandro: If your daughter is here, she shall leave when she desires to do so and not before.

Count (enraged): If she is here? You need not attempt to deny it. I saw her through the window. Don't fancy I misunderstand you. You are not the first young beggar who has looked longingly at my daughter's fortune.

Allesandro (cut to the quick): Fortune! As though I had not cursed it a million times. You know how I met Porphyria. You know that I was ignorant of the fact that she was cursed with a fortune until that wretched day you came. I have tried to keep away from her, but the agony has not been mine alone. It is as hard for her as it is for me. I warn you now, if you try to force her into something . . . (clenching his fist) . . . I shall keep away no longer.

Count (ironically): Thank you. May I hope for your congratulations? My daughter is to be a Duchess. Her engagement is to be announced within a month.

Allesandro (in a tone of horror): Within a month? To the Duke? (Deliberately) Your daughter will never be a Duchess to meet the fate of the last.

Count: I know my daughter better than you do. She will never renounce luxury for this (sweeping his hand contemptuously around).

Allesandro: That must be for Porphyria to decide.

Count: And I know how she will decide.

Allesandro: Yes, when you force her to that decision.

Count: Force will not be necessary. You shall see. I could drag my daughter home like a runaway slave if I wished. But she will come of her own accord in the end (smiling coldly, as he stands by the door to go out). I am glad of my knowledge of this episode. I am of the opinion that it will

make her more tractable in the future. I leave you to tell her that she will soon be a Duchess.
(Exit.)

Allesandro (Looks at the door through which the Count has gone. He is trembling with rage): God! why did I not kill him?

(*Porphyria* comes out of the closet. She is crying and excited.)

Porphyria (pathetically): They're going to cage your bird, *Allesandro*.

(*Allesandro* looks at her with a miserable face, drops into a chair, bows his head and groans. *Porphyria* comes hastily to him. Rather timidly she puts her hand on his head as though to comfort him.)

Porphyria: Please don't, *Allesandro*. I'll never consent. I'll come to you as I promised.

(*Allesandro* looks up and takes her hand in his. He gazes searchingly at her.)

Allesandro: *Porphyria*, can I trust you? (Bitterly)
But even if I could, I don't know what they may force you into.

(*Porphyria* slips one hand out of his and pushes his hair back. She is standing by the side of his chair with her face toward the audience.)

Porphyria: I will come, *Allesandro*. If they cage me, I will burst my bars when the Springtime comes and the whip-poor-will, and I will come to you. (More brightly) Don't grieve so. I know matters will adjust themselves better than you think.

(The clock on the mantle rather loudly strikes a quarter of one.) My poor little hour. It will soon be gone.

(*Porphyria* looks around at the clock as she speaks. She notices that the fire is almost out. She gently withdraws her hand and going to the fireplace, begins to stir the fire. As she is doing so, her hair comes uncoiled and falls down. It is long, and thick, and very beautiful. She starts to recoil it but *Allesandro*, who has been watching her, says hastily):

Allesandro: Please don't. Now you are my Diana of the orchard. I could go on my knees to you, *Porphyria*, when I see you looking so.

Porphyria (quickly): But you shall not. I will sit at your feet instead. (Dropping onto the stool in her former position, she looks up adoringly at him.) Just a few wee minutes more, *Allesandro*. Won't you make me happy again before I go?

Allesandro (caressing her hair once more): Make you happy? That is all I care to live for. I'm afraid to let you go, *Porphyria*. I'm afraid they will cage my beautiful bird till she can never come fluttering back to me. Can't you make up your mind to stay—now?

Porphyria: No! No! I couldn't. I will come back, *Allesandro*. Something will happen. Let us not think about it any longer. Finish the story and I will stay until you have done, even though it is more than an hour. You told me about her eyes.

You said they were blue. How did you say her eyes looked?

(*Porphyria* turns around on the stool as she asks the question. She is so beautiful that for a moment *Allesandro's* stern expression relaxes and his face brightens.)

Allesandro: I said the light in her eyes was softer than the petals of the dawn roses. When she spoke, I no longer listened for the night birds. They were all articulate in her voice. (As *Allesandro* has been speaking, a strange look has come into his face. He pauses a moment as though thinking intently. *Porphyria* looks at him questioningly.)
Porphyria, may I ask you a question?

Porphyria: Yes.

Allesandro: Suppose you were standing by your window some stormy night and a bird, our whip-poor-will, say, flew in to you from the darkness. Suppose you took it in your hand and caressed it and it began to sing. Suppose you knew there were only three ways in which you could dispose of the little songster. You could tie it "with a silken cord of your own hand's weaving," and you could love it while it gradually drooped, became dull, and died. You could turn it loose, not to freedom, but to coldness and cruelty where its song would cease more quickly and death would come more swiftly. Or you could, at the moment it was most alive, while it was still singing its joyous song, gently stop forever . . . the song . . . and the

life . . . before either could be made unhappy. What would you do, Porphyria? Do you think God would mind if you stopped its song?

Porphyria: That is a very strange question. (Thoughtfully, turning her face toward the fire once more.) I believe . . . God would be glad. I can't think he wants any of his tiny creatures to be unhappy. I would stop its song forever, Allesandro.

Allesandro: Thank you, Porphyria, for your answer. Pardon my digression. The question came to me while we were talking about our whip-poor-will. I will go on with our story. As I was saying, the prince sat up, and the fairy spoke, and he thought all the bird songs of a summer night were in her voice. Do you think he could have loved her then, Porphyria, that her voice made such music in his ears?

Porphyria: I could not say concerning the prince, Allesandro, but she was born loving him.

Allesandro: Then I think I can speak for him. He was born worshiping her. When did she love him the most, do you think?

Porphyria: Oh, not for a long time afterwards. Not till one night when she heard a whip-poor-will giving its old signal call and she came through the rain to him.

Allesandro: Could she ever have loved him more?

Porphyria: No, never. Her heart would have burst with the rapture of it.

Allesandro (He has grown strangely white. There is a look in his eyes as though he were seeing a vision. He gathers *Porphyria's* hair into a strand as though preparing to recoil it): I hold a million weary moonbeams in my hand. *Porphyria*, are you happy?

Porphyria: Utterly.

(*Allesandro's* face has become absolutely colorless. He stoops forward suddenly, and swiftly winds *Porphyria's* hair three times around her neck and strangles her. She makes no sound. After a time, he stoops and lifts her into his arms. Her head falls back against his shoulder. She is quite dead. He settles back in his chair, gently opens her eyelids, and looks into her eyes. Then he untightens the golden tress about her neck, and kisses her.

The stage is darkened for a few moments to indicate the passing of the night. Day breaks with the dim, cold light of the early morning. The fire is out. *Allesandro* is sitting as he was when the darkness fell. His face is pallid and drawn, but he is quite calm. He is talking slowly and softly to *Porphyria*.)

Allesandro: You felt no pain. I am quite sure you felt no pain . . . I have held you in my arms, *Porphyria*, all night long. I have stopped . . . your song . . . and God has not said a word.

(The peculiar double rap of the *Count* is heard at the outer door. *Allesandro* seems not to hear it.)

A LIGHT WOMAN

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ACT I

SCENE 1

(The time is early morning. The place is the garden at Thornton House. During the scene may be heard "Lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore.")

A man and a woman enter from the left. The man is *Ernest Hope*. He is fair, boyish, affectionate, slightly effeminate, honest and kind. His companion is *Pauline Powell*.

Pauline advances to the center of the stage. She has a strong, graceful bearing and a magnificent head. She stands in apparent enjoyment of the scene.

Presently, "sunbeams like swords" glance on the masses of her auburn hair. Like the Borgia's it seems "meandering in pellucid gold."

Pauline Powell has not known a deep emotion. The plummet lines of love, sorrow, ambition, self-sacrifice, have never been dropped into the depths of her soul. By nature a "rapid falcon," snared by society, she has done no more than "the flitting of the bat.")

Pauline (leaning against a tree. In a tone of satisfaction): Oh, there they are.

Ernest: Who?

Pauline: Put your ear to that tree. Now—what do you hear?

Ernest: Sap rising, I suppose.

Pauline (frowning): Never be literal, Ernest, unless you wish to be tiresome. Surely you can hear them whispering?

Ernest (blankly): Who? What, Pauline?

Pauline: The dryads imprisoned there.

Ernest (smiling): Oh—perhaps I didn't listen closely enough. (Humoring her, listening again.) I can't understand them. Can you?

Pauline: Not clearly; their hearts beat too loudly. I think—they are discussing—(listening intently)—

Ernest: What?

Pauline (unexpectedly): Costumes.

Ernest (laughing): Really? They are feminine dryads, then. Your fairies seem quite human. Shall we sit here and rest?

Pauline (sitting beside him): Not long. I promised Lucy to meet her at Fillipo's.

Ernest: Which was very unkind of you.

Pauline: We are to shop this morning.

Ernest: I wish you were a fairy or a dryad.

Pauline: Why?

Ernest: Then you couldn't evade me so easily.

Pauline: I'm so disappointed!

Ernest: What about?

Pauline: I thought perhaps you considered me your good fairy.

Ernest: I don't consider you any kind of a fairy. I could more easily imagine you to be a goddess. After all, I am glad you are neither.

Pauline: Tell me why.

Ernest: I would not change perfection.

Pauline: Thank you, Ernest. I can depend upon you for one compliment, per occasion, can't I? Provided I lead up to it, of course. Now that I have my quota, I really must go. Lucy gets so nervous waiting.

Ernest: Miss Thornton should practice patience.

Pauline: It is not her nature to do so. Lucy is a dear little thing.

Ernest: Oh, yes—but a morning like this—

Pauline (nodding): I know. Ernest,—“Hark to yon reedy note. It never came from a feathered throat.”

Ernest (listening): I hear nothing except the wind and the water.

Paul: It was “Pan with the pipe at his bearded lips.”

Ernest (obstinately): It was the wind.

Pauline: The wind and the waves—the birds and the growing flowers—that is “the music the Pan-pipes play.” Shall you accept Lucy's invitation for tomorrow night?

Ernest: Shall you not be there?

Pauline: Naturally, since the dinner is given in my honor.

Ernest: You know that nothing could keep me away.

Pauline (smiling in appreciation): Really, you are developing.

Ernest: That encourages me to ask if you will attend the race with me this afternoon.

Pauline: With pleasure.

Ernest: As you might say, I shall float among golden clouds of happiness.

Pauline: I might say it, but don't expect me to do anything like that. Be careful, Ernest. You are rather overdoing it. Don't make me too many pretty speeches. You might come to believe the sound of your own voice.

Ernest (suddenly grave): I do believe it, Pauline. I mean what I have said a thousand times over. I can't jest very well. Let me say at once what you know already, what has been true since the first time I saw the sunlight glinting on your hair. I love you. Tell me that you—

Pauline (accustomed to such declarations): No. I am sorry, Ernest. I like you immensely, but—

Ernest: But you do not love me?

Pauline: I believe the capacity to love has been denied me.

Ernest: No, no. Only give me permission, and I will teach you how to love. You don't know yourself. (Eagerly.) May I teach you?

Pauline: Granted at your own risk. I am sure to prove a dull pupil.

Ernest (striving to be gay): With such a teacher! You remind me of Hugh.

Pauline: Hugh?

Ernest: My friend, Hugh Carelton. He has the same absurd idea; that he will never love. His time will come.

Pauline (rising): As mine has for joining Lucy.

Ernest: I warn you that I shall be an indefatigable teacher.

Pauline: And I warn you to expect failure.

Ernest (holding up his hand as though to command the attention of an audience): Imprisoned Dryads, Fairies, and Unseen Powers, I call you to witness that I assume all risk in teaching your kindred spirit the greatest lesson in the universe. I further register this vow before you—mine shall be the glory of winning this proud lady.

(With becoming grace he kisses her hand. *Pauline* smiles in careless enjoyment of the situation.)

SCENE 2

(The time is a little later than Scene 1. The place is the laboratory of *Fillipo*, the miser chemist. The room is a jewelry shop and a laboratory combined. *Fillipo* mends jewelry, buys it, sells it, gloats over it. He carries on strange experiments as well.

When the curtain rises, *Fillipo* is discovered pounding gum in a mortar. His thin miserly lips are shut in a straight line, and his cruel dark eyes are bent intently on the work in hand.

The stage is suffused with a blue haze which gradually disappears when *Fillipo* opens the window.

The window at left back faces the street. People pass from time to time as the scene proceeds.

Lucy Thornton passes the window and enters at right. She is small, dainty, and vivacious.)

Lucy: *Fillipo*.

Fillipo (turning around): Yes?

Lucy (unclasping a bracelet): Can you tighten the stone in this bracelet?

Fillipo (seizing it): I can.

Lucy: Then do so, please.

Fillipo (fondling it): I'll send it to you when—

Lucy: No, I'll wait.

Fillipo (opening the window): Wait here, then.

Lucy: Why?

Fillipo: 'Tis safer. (Covetously.) I'd pay you well for this.

Lucy (impatiently): Hurry, please.

Fillipo (fascinated): I'll give you more than it is worth.

Lucy: No, no. It is a family heirloom. I would not think of selling it.

Fillipo (sighing): I'll tighten the setting. Sometime I can—(mumbling)—a fortune by itself.

Lucy (suddenly, leaning out of the window): Pauline! Here I am. I have to wait a few minutes. How do you do, Mr. Hope?

Ernest (outside): How do you do, Miss Thornton?

Pauline: Shall I come in?

Lucy: If you choose.

(There is a confused murmur of voices outside for a moment, and *Pauline* enters.)

Pauline: I am so glad you did not wait for me. (Looking around.) How curious! Do you come here often, Lucy?

Lucy: No. (In a low tone.) I dislike to come here. (Speaking naturally.) I bring my jewels for Fillipo to mend.

Pauline: What do those bottles contain?

Lucy: How should I know? I'm no chemist.

Pauline: Fillipo!

Fillipo (turning): At your service, lady.

Pauline: What is in those bottles?

Fillipo: Different things.

Pauline: Yes, but what?

Fillipo: A lot of things. Medicine, poison—

Lucy (shuddering): Poison, Hurry, Fillipo. Your shop depresses me.

Pauline (laughing): Nonsense, Little Lucy. Poison won't harm you as long as it is bottled.

Lucy: I know, but I—(bowing out of the window).
How do you do, Mr. Darrow?

Pauline: Was that Mr. John Darrow?

Lucy: Yes. Do you know him?

Pauline: Slightly. He is a particular friend of Ernest's.

Lucy: There is a reason for that.

Pauline: I know,—Ernest's sister.

Lucy: Yes. By the way, Pauline, may I ask what you intend to do with Ernest?

Pauline (innocently): Nothing. Why?

Lucy (pointedly): Can you stop at nothing?

Pauline (promptly): I can.

Lucy: Can Ernest?

Pauline: Don't worry, Little Lucy. That is Ernest's concern. Besides—

Lucy (out of the window): How do you do, Mr. Carelton? Besides, what?

Pauline: You may think me egotistical. I was going to say that Ernest needs developing.

Lucy: Such development as you have in mind does not always bring happiness.

Pauline (indifferently): Doesn't it? Was that Mr. Hugh Carelton who just passed?

Lucy (surprised): Yes. Do you know him?

Pauline (recalling *Ernest's* remark): I thought I remembered his name on your dinner list.

Lucy: Yes. Pauline?

Pauline: What is it?

Lucy (clasping her hands nervously, blushing): I want to ask a favor of you.

Pauline: Do so by all means.

Lucy: Mr. Carelton and I were childhood friends.

Pauline: Well?

Lucy: In memory of our childish friendship, I would ask you to spare him.

Pauline: Lucy!

Lucy: You know what I mean.

Pauline (coldly): I'm afraid I do not.

Lucy: You make most men admire you more than is good for their peace of mind.

Pauline: Make them? I have nothing to do with it.

Lucy (sharply): How can you say so?

Pauline (calmly): True, I am generally misunderstood. Believe me, Lucy, it is not always my fault. I value the few real friendships I have been able to form with men. I never desire more. It is not my fault if they—

Lucy: I understand. (Enviously.) You are so beautiful, Pauline, you don't realize the impression you make.

Pauline (lightly): Thank you, Little Lucy.

Lucy: Of course (*Lucy* tries to speak unconcernedly) it is nothing to me, but I do hope you will let Mr. Carelton alone.

Pauline (proudly): Certainly, if you desire it. (Maliciously.) Provided I can. Had it occurred to you that Mr. Carelton might himself become interested in me?

Lucy: He is very reserved. It is not likely that he will. If he does—

Pauline: What?

Lucy: I would think he was in deadly earnest.

Pauline: Thank you for the warning. I believe Fillipo has finished.

Fillipo: If you ever want to sell—

Lucy: Yes, yes. I'll remember you. Come, Pauline.

Pauline (kindly): Let us get back into the sunshine. Why, Little Lucy, you are trembling!

SCENE 3

(The time is evening of the same day. The place is *John Darrow's* library. It is a luxurious room, the result of a refined taste.

Hugh Carelton, dark, strong, handsome, twenty-eight years old, sits at the left, a cigar stand by his side.

John Darrow is opposite *Hugh*. He is pleasant, thoughtful, and slightly melancholy. He is forty-nine years old.)

Hugh: I was surprised at the result of the race this afternoon, weren't you?

John: I did not see it.

Hugh: What? You miss a boat race?

John: It is unusual. Boat-racing, any water event, water itself, has a peculiar fascination for me.

Hugh: Pardon me, John. Were you ill? I thought you seemed not quite yourself this morning.

John: I was not ill. I'm a foolish fellow, I know. I could not bear the crowd this afternoon. (In a low tone.) It was just one year ago today that Evelyn died.

Hugh: Oh—I did not know—I did not remember.

John: Why should you? You did not love her.

Hugh: I had scarcely seen her. I remember that Ernest was awfully cut up at the time. How old was she?

John: She was only sixteen years old when she died!

Hugh: Ernest has told me of your devotion to her.

John: I made no attempt to conceal it.

Hugh: She must have loved you had she lived to reach maturity.

John: The great difference in our age would have made that impossible.

Hugh: Surely not.

John: Yes. I was three times as old as she. No (sadly), she could not have loved me, but I never had loved, I never can love, another.

Hugh: That is morbid, John. She was but a mere child.

John: I can't explain it. When she stood before me so young, so frank, so radiant, I knew with a certainty deeper than reason that Fate had played me the shabby trick of sending me into the world too soon or her too late.

Hugh: How little we know the people we live among! Why, John, I never suspected you of morbidness.

John: Nor need you now. What Evelyn and I have missed here, we will gain in some other world, I trust. I believe "God creates the love to reward the love."

Hugh: You mean—

John: I am not sure I can make you understand. As I sat in that room where no light passed save two long rays through the hinge's chink, a conviction came to me that sometime, after I have lived through many worlds, perhaps, and been sacrificed a number of times if need be, we will meet on an equal plane.

Hugh: An equal plane?

John: With the accidental difference in our ages removed. Evelyn will then recognize me as I have already recognized her.

Hugh: Jacob served seven years for Rachel. You would serve seven hundred years if need be. That is a beautiful—

John: Mysticism? Call it what you will. I believe that in time many things will be made clear. (Dreamily.) Why her hair was amber I shall divine, and her mouth of her own geranium's red. There was a sprig of geranium dying, too, in a glass. I shut it within her sweet, cold hand. Then just once I kissed her lips. Sometime, she will wake, and remember, and understand.
(A servant enters with the evening mail.)

John: Read your letters, Hugh. (Embarrassed.) I never talked like this before. I don't know why—

Hugh: I understand, somewhat, at least. I appreciate your confidence.

John: It is the first anniversary of her death, you know. (Restlessly, opening his letters.) Have you any interesting mail?
(A servant announces "Mr. Hope." *Ernest* enters.)

Ernest: How do you do, Hugh? How are you, John?
Excuse my running in like this.

John: You know you are always welcome. Sit here.
Have a cigar.

Ernest: Thanks, I haven't time for it, I'm afraid.

Hugh: Surely you have time for one cigar?

Ernest: Well, I'll finish it as I go along. The fact is,
I'm calling on a lady.

Hugh: Has it come to this! (He throws up his hands
in mock despair.)

Ernest: Never mind, Hugh. Your time will come.
Mother was a little worried about you, John. I
promised her I would drop in and make sure you
were feeling fit.

John: Thank you. I am sorry Mrs. Hope was concerned.
I'll call tomorrow and assure her I am quite well.

Ernest: Yes, do. What did you think of the boat race,
Hugh?

Hugh: I was decidedly surprised at the outcome.

Ernest: So was I.

Hugh: By the way, Ernest, pardon my inquisitiveness, but who was the lady you were absorbed in this afternoon?

Ernest: Pauline Powell. Have you never met her?

Hugh: No, but I am to have the opportunity tomorrow night at Thornton's, I believe.

Ernest: Yes, she is the guest of honor. But I give you friendly warning, Hugh, that you are to let Miss Powell alone.

Hugh: My dear fellow, you interest me.

Ernest: Not in Miss Powell, I hope. None of your blarney with her, you handsome scoundrel. I have not forgotten your career at Oxford.

Hugh: But, Ernest, how extremely selfish! Here you are miles ahead, and trying to stop me before I begin. A fair field and may I gain favor, say I.
(*Ernest* shakes his fist at *Hugh*, and turns to *John*.)

Ernest: Mother was just a little anxious. I'm glad you are feeling well. I'll see you both tomorrow night.

Hugh (teasingly): Yes, I shall be very much in evidence tomorrow night.

Ernest: Not too much, not too much in evidence, Hugh, or you are no friend of mine.

Hugh (slapping him on the back): Get along with you, and don't disturb two peaceful bachelors.

Ernest: Good-night, both of you.

Both: Good-night, Ernest. (Exit *Ernest*.)

Hugh (closing the door and resuming his seat): Who is this Miss Powell, John?

John: She is a friend of Lucy Thornton's. I understand she is making an extended visit while Lucy's parents are away.

Hugh: Lucy has a very beautiful companion in Miss Powell, if I could judge correctly this afternoon.

John: You will be astonished, Hugh, when I tell you that this same Miss Powell is causing me a good deal of anxiety.

Hugh: Indeed! May I ask in what way?

John: On account of Ernest.

Hugh: I supposed he was joking. Is the situation serious?

John: He is planning the wreck of his future happiness if I can believe my eyes.

Hugh: You startle me. What concerns Ernest touches me. As you know, he is the most intimate friend I have since Waring dropped out of my life.

John: How singular!

Hugh: That Ernest and I should be intimate?

John: No, that both your friends should suffer from the same cause.

Hugh: What do you mean?

John: How did you explain Waring's disappearance?

Hugh: I had no satisfactory explanation. We supped together the night he gave us all the slip. We had started to walk home through the December snow. I left his arm a moment to speak to a new prose poet. How was I to know he meant to glide away? He was prouder than the devil. I've thought perhaps he went away to write a book or to do something that would make us all proud of him.

John: I am convinced he went away because of a woman.

Hugh: Impossible!

John: I am sure of it. The same night, I fancy, that he left you, I was walking by the river watching the snow on the water.

Hugh: I always said you should have been an artist, John. Snow on the water is beautiful.

John: Very. I had an odd fancy that it was like Evelyn—her life, I mean. Perfectly pure it came; it barely touched the water as she barely touched the stream of life, and it was gone, pure as when it came.

Hugh (nodding): And like her, it was beautiful during the entire period of its existence.

John: Exactly so. Busy with my thoughts, I scarcely noticed when darkness fell. I had paused in the shadow of the buttress of the bridge when a man and a woman stopped in front of me. I thought they would go on. It would have been extremely

awkward for me to move afterward, because I recognized the man as Waring.

Hugh: Who was the woman?

John: I am positive she was Pauline Powell. I could never forget her voice, nor her face.

Hugh (amazed): And she bowled over old Waring! Since I think of it, I believe it is she I have heard referred to as "the Light Woman."

John: The woman who could answer lightly, as she did, a plea like Waring's—he was putting his whole soul into it—must, indeed, be a light woman.

Hugh: I never dreamed of Waring— You couldn't have been mistaken, I suppose?

John: No, the light from a passing steamer fell full upon them, and I saw them distinctly. It was Waring all right; his face white and drawn. Hers was perfectly calm, perfectly beautiful, as she denied him all hope in a voice— Her voice fascinated me, Hugh. It was like nothing I have heard except the solemn, deep-toned ocean. Waring swore he would take passage that very night. He made good his words, as you know.

Hugh: And that is Pauline Powell! Very well. She shall not ruin Ernest's life as she evidently has Waring's.

John: There is nothing to prevent her, I fear.

Hugh: I will prevent her. What? Shall I sit by while she tosses my friends at will onto the heap of her

victims? A kindlier, more trusting soul never lived than Ernest Hope, and Waring—I tell you, John, I have missed him frightfully. There is nothing I would not do for him if he would come back to me. I've not been myself since he went away.

John: I wish something might be done, but I fear Ernest is already infatuated.

Hugh (firmly): I shall make an effort on his behalf.

John: The case is a delicate one. I doubt if Ernest, himself, would brook interference.

Hugh: But, for his good, I will take it upon myself to interfere.

John: Pardon me, Hugh, I know your intentions are the best in the world, but I don't like your plan.

Hugh: Have you anything to suggest?

John: No.

Hugh: Why do you object to my interference?

John: Because I think it a serious matter to meddle with souls.

Hugh: Nevertheless, if need be, I will for once "assume the God."

ACT II

(Evening. It is the next day after Act I. The scene is the drawing room of Thornton House. There is a door at left front leading to the conservatory. One at left back leads to the hallway. At right back is an open door through which may be seen a charming balcony.

Lucy Thornton flutters in from this same balcony. She is gowned attractively, but simply. She adds a touch here and there to the room, as she moves restlessly about.

Poor little *Lucy* suffers an immediate eclipse when *Pauline Powell* enters. Wherever *Pauline* moves to-night she will be the refulgent luminary. Her hair, piled high, gleams with genuine gold. *Lucy* catches her breath enviously at sight of this tall beauty.)

Lucy (impulsively): I couldn't resist you myself, Pauline.

Pauline: Thank you. You are twice as dainty.

Lucy (bitterly): Dainty? Insignificant, while you are—

Pauline: Very well. What am I?

Lucy (abruptly): You can't keep your promise if you look—so.

Pauline: What promise do you mean?

Lucy: About Mr. Carelton.

Pauline: Can't I? Then I will assume a horrid expression. (Looking around.) The rooms are beautiful, and so is the conservatory with those strange new specimens.

Lucy (nervously): If they will only come promptly. I dread the first part of the evening.

Pauline (easily): Don't worry. We will find some means of entertaining them.

Lucy: Will you sing if I ask you? That is, if some one is late and we have to wait.

Pauline: Certainly. I prefer to sing before dinner. What music have you? (Crosses to piano.)
(*Ernest Hope* is announced and enters.)

Lucy: Good evening, Mr. Hope.

Ernest (bowing): How do you do, Miss Powell?

Lucy: Pauline is going to sing for us.

Ernest (eagerly, going towards the piano): May I select your song?

Pauline: You may, provided you choose one I like. Lucy, will you play for me?

Lucy: Ask Mr. Hope.

Ernest: I hasten to offer my services.

Pauline: I was not aware you played.

(*Mr. and Mrs. James Lee* are announced. Pretty *Mrs. Lee* and her young husband are still very much in love with each other.)

Mrs. Lee: How are you, Lucy? Your dress is charming.

Lucy: Thank you, Cora. How do you do, Mr. Lee?

Mrs. Lee, permit me to introduce Pauline Powell.

Mrs. Lee: I'm delighted, Miss Powell. Lucy has told me of you.

Pauline: Thank you. Lucy has told me of you, also.

Lucy: Miss Powell, Mr. Lee. (To *Mr.* and *Mrs. Lee.*)

I believe you and Mr. Hope are old friends.

Ernest (coming forward): Old and tried. How do you do, Cora? I hope you are not going to scold me?

Mrs. Lee: You know you deserve it.

Ernest: How are you, James?

Mr. Lee: She was very angry when you failed to come to dinner.

Ernest: I sent a note expl——

Mrs. Lee: Yes. I said you were getting to be quite like Clara.

(*John Darrow* enters. He knows every one. He exchanges greetings with each one.)

John: You are fortunate in your choice of an evening, Miss Thornton.

Lucy: Yes, indeed, the night is lovely.

(*Hugh Carelton* enters. He knows every one except *Pauline*, to whom he is introduced.)

Pauline (stiffly): How do you do, Mr. Carelton?

Hugh: I am happy to meet you, Miss Powell. Is this your first visit to Thornton House?

Pauline: Yes.

Hugh: It is not your last, I hope.

Pauline: Not if Lucy is kind enough to ask me again.

Hugh: Miss Thornton used always to be kind.

Lucy (blushing): I fear your memory is treacherous.

Mrs. Lee: When will your parents return, Lucy?

Lucy: Not for six months or more.

John: I trust your mother's health is improving.

Lucy: Thank you. Father writes very encouragingly.

John: Some one told me—was it you, Ernest?—that Mr. Thornton was sending home a collection of rare plants. Is that true?

Lucy: Yes. You might be interested in seeing them. They have been placed in the conservatory.

John: I should like very much to see them.

Mrs. Lee: Oh, let us all see them! May we?

Lucy: Certainly. Father will be delighted to know you were interested.

(They all go towards the conservatory except *Pauline* and *Ernest*.)

Ernest: It was jolly nice of them to go in there.

Pauline: Why do you say that? Shall we go, too?

Ernest: No, indeed. I meant it was nice of them because I can't teach with too many around.

Pauline: That is unfortunate. I do not understand why the presence of—

Ernest: I become nervous.

Pauline (consolingly): When you have had experience, I am sure you will do very nicely.

Ernest: It is not for a pupil to criticize her teacher. Tell me, Pauline, have you progressed any with the lesson I am—

Pauline (kindly): Better give it up, Ernest. I am hopelessly dull.

Ernest (with determination): I will devote my life to it or teach you—

Hugh (re-entering): What is he teaching you, Miss Powell? I can do it with less pain.

Ernest: Hugh!

Hugh: He means to imply that I am egotistical. You will find me, Miss Powell, as modest as the rising sun.

Ernest: Yes, or the famous cock who believed the sun got up to hear him crow.

Hugh: Only try me, Miss Powell.

Pauline (repressing a smile, rather haughtily): Thank you. I am in no immediate need of tuition that I know of. Could you find nothing of interest in the conservatory?

Hugh (gallantly): Not in comparison with what I had left in the drawing-room.

Ernest: This drawing-room is extraordinary. It has (looking around, with exaggerated surprise) four walls!

Hugh: How clever of you, Ernest, to discover that. I referred to the jewel itself, however, and not to the setting.

Pauline (refusing to acknowledge the compliment): Did you see these views, Mr. Carelton?

Hugh (taking them): No.

Pauline: Examine them if you care to. Mr. Hope, we were going to select a song.

(She turns away with *Ernest*. *Hugh* is surprised. He watches them.)

Mr. Lee (sauntering in): Are you going to sing for us, Miss Powell?

Pauline: Presently, perhaps.

Mr. Lee: Do. (He goes on out to the balcony.)

John (coming in): You missed the most beautiful plant, *Hugh*.

Hugh: I will see it another time.

(*Hugh* deliberately walks over to the piano. *John* joins *Mr. Lee* on the balcony. *Lucy* and *Mrs. Lee* come back in.)

Lucy (glancing suspiciously at *Pauline*. Sweetly): Can I help you, *Pauline*?

Pauline: Thank you, Little Lucy. Not at all.

Lucy (looking around): Every one has come except Clara.

Hugh (sitting beside *Lucy*, who has sat down for a moment): Miss Powell will not accept my assistance. I am sure I have good taste. Have I not, Mrs. Lee?

Mrs. Lee: I am convinced of it. I remember the pleasure I had in hearing you and Mr. Waring sing once upon a time.

Hugh: Thank you. I'd give a good deal to hear Waring sing once more.

Mrs. Lee: Where is he?

Hugh: I wish I knew. (He eyes *Pauline*.) None of his friends know where he is.

Lucy: Why did he go away?

Hugh: We do not know that either. (Abruptly) Miss Powell, were you acquainted with Waring?

Pauline (calmly): Jack Waring?

Hugh: Yes.

Pauline (indifferently): I knew him.

Hugh: You knew, perhaps, of his strange disappearance?

Pauline: I—heard something about it.

Lucy: Will you sing for us, Pauline, please?

Pauline: If you wish.

(*Ernest* plays. She sings an Italian love song. A little storm of applause follows the close of the song.)

John (who has come in from the balcony, sincerely): Permit me to congratulate you upon your voice, Miss Powell. It is very beautiful.

Pauline: I thank you.

Hugh: Yes, indeed. Sing for us again, won't you? (He walks impulsively over to the piano. *Lucy's* gaze follows him.) You must sing one more song.

Pauline: Shall I sing again, Lucy?

Lucy (constrainedly): Please do.

Pauline (to *Ernest*): What shall I sing?

Hugh: That is unfair—I should be permitted to choose the number.

Pauline (politely): What will you select, Mr. Carelton?

Hugh: Sing this, if you please.

Pauline: No, you must excuse me, after all.

(*Pauline* drifts away from the piano and presently she goes out onto the balcony. *Ernest* starting after her is stopped by *Mrs. Lee*.)

Mrs. Lee: Ernest, do you know whether your mother obtained that bronze motto?

Ernest (pausing): For the library, you mean?

Mrs. Lee: Yes.

Ernest: She succeeded in getting it through a friend in town. It fits in nicely with the new hangings.

Mrs. Lee: James and I discovered one we thought she might like.

Ernest: It's kind of you to mention it.

(*Lucy and Ernest eye Hugh as he joins Pauline on the balcony.*)

Mr. Lee: Are you lonesome, Miss Thornton, with your parents away?

Lucy: Sometimes. But it was necessary that they should go. My mother's nerves are quite disordered. Yes, I am often lonely.

John (musingly): Lonesomeness is a state of the mind, more or less, I believe.

Ernest: To be sure. So is happiness. So is sadness. The point is—what can be done to change the state of mind?

John: Various things. It depends on the individual. What do you do to cure your lonesomeness, Mrs. Lee?

Mrs. Lee: I talk to James, and he talks to me. Don't you, James?

James (good-naturedly): Always, unless I weep upon your shoulder.

Lucy (tapping her foot restlessly): I am sure Clara must be detained.

Ernest: Do you mean Clara Hastings?

Lucy: Yes.

Ernest: Oh, she will send a note. You might as well consider it done. (He goes out onto the balcony.)

Lucy (fluttering about): Have you seen these views father sent, Mr. Darrow?

John: I have just looked at them. They are extremely interesting.

Lucy: So I thought.

Mr. Lee: I, for one, would not enjoy climbing that highest peak.

Lucy: Nor I.

John: I should.

Mr. Lee: Life is too sweet to be flung away.

John: True, but I should not consider that I was flinging it away. When the times comes, wherever, or however, it does come for me to set forth on the last great adventure, I shall go with a glad heart, feeling sure that no action of mine has hastened my departure.

Mr. Lee: You believe, then, that when our time comes to—

Lucy (shuddering): Let us talk of something else.

Mr. Lee: You are nervous, Miss Thornton.

Lucy: Perhaps I am.

(There is a strange expression on *Lucy's* face as *Pauline* enters, followed by *Hugh* and *Ernest*.)

Pauline: Do look at the moon, Little Lucy!

Lucy: Why?

Hugh: Why? Can you ask "why," Miss Thornton?
Because it is "hung like a lamp in a lilac tree, a
light for lovers (pointing at *Ernest*, but glancing
at *Pauline*) like you and me."

Lucy (smiling faintly): Then it is not for me.

Mrs. Lee: My dear Lucy!

Hugh: Miss Thornton has grown hard hearted.

Ernest (turning slyly to *Pauline*): Perhaps she has
had too much experience.

Lucy: Excuse me!

(A servant hands her a note.)

You were a true prophet, Mr. Hope. Miss
Hastings sends a note of regret. We will go in
to dinner without further delay. You must draw
for partners (handing around a tray); whoever
draws Clara's card—

Hugh (gloomily): I'm sure to draw it.

Mr. Lee (drawing. To *Lucy*): I am fortunate. (He
offers her his arm.)

Ernest: Ah, luckless me! I am to have the phantom
partner.

Lucy: You may come with us, Mr. Hope. We will
lead the way.

(*Exeunt slowly.*)

John (to *Mrs. Lee*): Age has nothing to do with luck.

Hugh (to *Pauline*): I believe in luck.

Pauline: Do you?

Hugh: Yes, I drew your card.

Pauline: Do you consider your luck good or bad?

Hugh: I pray, fervently, it will not change.

Pauline (gravely): How often do we pray, knowing not what we ask. Exeunt.)

SCENE 2

(The scene is the garden, the same as Scene 1, Act I. It is late afternoon. *Pauline* and *Hugh* enter in riding costume.)

Hugh: Why do you consider Dido foolish?

Pauline: Because she sacrificed herself for the sake of a bold adventurer.

Hugh: Her heart was sad for the loss of Æneas. She knew he would come no more to Carthage. Death was sweeter than life.

Pauline: Then she merely chose the easier course.

Hugh: Was that foolish?

Pauline: It was cowardly.

Hugh: I agree with you, there. I believe that in most cases suicide is the act of a coward.

Pauline (lifting her head, bravely): Though my "bread was sorrow, and my drink was tears," I should stay till the finish.

Hugh (sincerely): I believe you would. After all, Dido was not called upon to bear the keenest form of suffering.

Pauline: What is that?

Hugh: I fancy it to be the suffering which would come from the knowledge that through some action of ours we had entailed suffering upon others.

(*Pauline* is unconscious of the searching gaze which he bends on her as he says this.)

Pauline: I should think that would depend upon the nature of the action. If one was innocent of the intent to cause—

Hugh: I should suffer anyhow.

Pauline: Should you? But you couldn't fancy being weak enough to—

Hugh: No. Come, let us have no more talk of sorrow. Have you noticed the delicate color of those shadows?

Pauline: Yes, and alas, the slanting of them. Ernest is coming to tea. Lucy will be annoyed. We are already late, you see. (She points to the table.)

Hugh: Can we reconcile "the largeness of the evening earth" with a cup of tea?

Pauline: We are extraordinary if we do not. The majority of people ignore the most sublime of natural phenomena for the sake of food.

Hugh: I confess my guilt.

Pauline: It is universal. For the sake of breakfast,

luncheon, dinner, we ignore "vast dawns," purple noons, and the "mother of the dews, deep eye-lashed twilight."

Hugh: You should have lived in Arcady, Miss Powell.

Pauline: I have never been sure as to the location of that charming spot.

Hugh: Oh, it lay in the land of Romance, in the time of eternal April, and it was warmed by the sun of love.

Pauline (smiling): I wonder if I should have been lonesome there?

Hugh: Lonesome? In Arcady? (Reproachfully.) You know I would have found you out.

Pauline: Sooner than you did here?

Hugh: I have been hunting you all the while; I am glad I found you in time.

Pauline: In time for what?

Hugh: In time to make you love me.

Pauline: Oh—(confused) really, shall you do that?

Hugh: I am resolved upon it. Pauline, why were you so indifferent to me at first?

Pauline (anxiously): Was I ever indifferent to you, Hugh?

Hugh: You made me believe so.

Pauline: Ah, Hugh, we are forced to pretend so many things. I am sure I was never— But I must tell Lucy that we are here.

Hugh: Not yet, Pauline. Let us walk to the lake and back.

Pauline: But Lucy—

Hugh: Lucy will have to wait.

(*Lucy* enters carrying some roses. She sees that her guests have not yet arrived. She arranges the flowers and then sits in a listless attitude by a tea table. *Ernest Hope* enters from the left.)

Lucy (starting violently): Oh—

Ernest: I am very sorry, Miss Thornton. I did not intend to startle you.

Lucy (recovering herself): How foolish of me. (Nervously.) Won't you have tea? I was waiting for Pauline.

Ernest: Thank you. I was told that she was out. I ventured to join you.

Lucy: You came to see Pauline, of course. Every one (bitterly) calls on Pauline.

Ernest: She is very popular, is she not?

Lucy (dryly): Very.

Ernest: It is only natural. One so beautiful as she— (listening). I thought I heard some one. (Disappointed.) No, the fact is, I had an appointment with Miss Powell.

Lucy: We were to have had tea half an hour ago.

Ernest: No doubt she was unavoidably detained.

Lucy: She is riding with Mr. Carelton.

Ernest: Hugh?

Lucy: Yes. Are you astonished?

Ernest: I—understood they went riding yesterday.

Lucy: They did. They go every day. You and Mr. Carelton were friends at Oxford, were you not?

Ernest: The best of friends. Hugh is the finest fellow I know. I would trust him with my life.

Lucy (a curious gleam in her eyes): Would you trust him with anything more precious than life?

Ernest (smiling): If it were possible. I am sure of his friendship for me.

Lucy (passionately): We can be sure of nothing except sorrow.

Ernest: Why, Miss Thornton, you sound pessimistic.

Lucy: Excuse me. How could I be so inhospitable?

Ernest: You puzzle me.

Lucy: And puzzles are so tiresome? For instance, that dreadfully tiresome puzzle of why we are born. Have you solved it, Mr. Hope?

Ernest: Long ago. We were born to enjoy life.

Lucy: Then that but brings us to a greater puzzle. Why don't we?

Ernest (boyishly): I never thought about it. I suppose it is our own fault if we do not.

Lucy (curiously): Do you really believe that?

Ernest: I suppose so. Do you?

Lucy (violently): No. It is not my fault. If my trust is betrayed and unhappiness follows, the fault is not mine.

Ernest: No, in a case like that, I suppose it is not.

Lucy: Do you think it would be our fault if we stood by and permitted our happiness to be snatched away from us?

Ernest: Surely. (Listening.) Ah, I do hear them.

Lucy: Yes. Then you would think yourself justified if you fought to retain your joy in life?

Ernest: I will be frank. I have never thought about it. I believe I would. Here they are. (*Pauline and Hugh re-enter.*) You show evidence of extreme haste.

Pauline: Oh, Ernest. (Carelessly giving him her hand.) We will have our walk after tea. Are we late? It is Mr. Carelton's fault. (Accepting tea.) Thank you.

Lucy (pointedly): You are only an hour late. We were glad to wait, of course.

Hugh: Am I to blame? She expressed her disbelief in Eldorado, and a desire to behold the same. Like the gallant knight I am, I—

Ernest (jeeringly): Hear him!

Hugh: Be quiet, Ernest. Like the gallant knight I am, I found it for her, although it took time.

Pauline: His search eventually led him to the tea table,

Hugh: When we came in sight I said, "Behold Eldorado, doubting one." My unerring instinct had led me aright.

Lucy: Do you allow yourself to be guided by instinct?

Hugh: More or less. Do you?

Lucy: Is it safe to follow one's instinct?

Hugh: In most things, I believe it is safe enough.

Lucy: In hunting, for instance. Do you think it right to follow your instinct to kill?

Hugh: I suppose so. At least I shoot a sparrow occasionally.

Lucy: May I ask why?

Hugh: Upon my word, Miss Thornton, you are too much for me. Because it gives me pleasure, I presume.

Lucy: Would you think yourself justified in killing whatever gave you pleasure?

Hugh: Frankly, I have never considered the matter.

Pauline: We really did have a glorious ride.

Ernest: Where did you ride?

Pauline: Oh, searching for Eldorado. "Over the hills and far away." We looked, incidentally, for water lilies.

Ernest: Was your search rewarded?

Pauline: No. May I have another cup of tea? Thank you, Little Lucy.

Hugh: Ernest, have you seen John today?

Ernest: He was calling on mother this afternoon. Do you enjoy riding, Miss Powell?

Pauline: Very much.

Ernest: May I have the pleasure of a ride with you tomorrow?

Hugh (quickly): You are too late, Ernest. She is riding with me.

Ernest (disappointed): Oh, excuse me.

Lucy (who has not been asked to ride, sarcastically): The day is long. Couldn't you accommodate both, Pauline?

Pauline (serenely): Thank you, Little Lucy. A good suggestion. (To *Ernest*.) Shall we mount at dawn, and hunt the morning on the hills?

Ernest (triumphantly): It is you who will be late, Hugh. (To *Pauline*.) I'll show you a spot where the lilies blow.

Pauline: So, Mr. Hugh Lack-Lily! I shall have a knight with the dawning more efficient by far.

Hugh (sighing): Such is the reward of failure. Is she not unkind, Miss Thornton?

Lucy: Mr. Hope does not think so.

Pauline (eyeing the roses on the tea table): What is more beautiful than a rose?

Hugh: Is that a riddle?

Pauline: No, only an idle question.

Hugh: Give me time to think.

Ernest: For shame, Hugh. A beautiful woman, to be sure.

Lucy (sharply): One beautiful woman in particular.

Hugh: I have it! "The light of a dark eye in woman."

Lucy (tensely): Death to one's enemies.

Pauline: Why, Little Lucy, you astonish me!

Lucy: I thought I was too insignificant to cause astonishment in anyone.

Ernest: Miss Thornton is in a strange mood today. She had almost reduced me to thought before you came.

Hugh: Miss Powell, which of us answered your question correctly?

Pauline: None of you.

Ernest: What is your answer?

Pauline: Oh, a thousand roses in the moonlight. (Rising.) Little Lucy, please excuse me—I will dress for walking.

Lucy: Certainly.

Hugh (politely): Will you walk with me, Miss Thornton?

Lucy (starting nervously, dropping a tea cup): How awkward of me! (Coldly.) Thank you, no. I am going out this evening. I must beg to be excused.

Hugh (glancing at *Pauline*): I might as well take myself off.

Pauline: You may walk with us. You don't mind, Ernest?

Ernest (who does mind, rather): Oh, no, certainly not. I hope your memory is not failing, Hugh.

Hugh: Not at all. I still remember that I made no promise.

Lucy: Why didn't you?

Hugh: Make a promise? (*Lucy* nods.) I was afraid I might break it.

Lucy: That need not have deterred you. (Looking at *Pauline*, bitterly.) It seems easily done. Good-evening, both.

Ernest: Good-evening, Miss Thornton. I have enjoyed my tea very much.

Hugh (to *Pauline* passing): You can be kind, after all. (Exeunt *Lucy* and *Pauline*. *Hugh* hands *Ernest* a cigar.) Let us have comfort.

Ernest: Thanks. (Affectionately.) Hugh, I fancy I discovered something this afternoon.

Hugh: You astonish me. What? That the sun shone, and that Lucy Thornton in a garden was fair to see?

Ernest: You almost guessed it. My discovery has to do with Miss Thornton.

Hugh: Out with it.

Ernest: You don't mind?

Hugh: No, why should I?

Ernest: I believe she is in love with you.

Hugh: What! By the hid dubloons of Captain Kidd!
You are a romancer! Too much garden on a summer day.

Ernest (seriously): I am almost sure. I believe she is unhappy, also.

Hugh (slowly): There was some boy and girl nonsense between us, ages ago, before I matriculated even. I have forgotten all about it. Surely she has not misunderstood the little attentions I have been paying her lately. She is a good little thing, but—

Ernest (nodding): But she is not—she is not—

Hugh (calmly): Magnificent, like Pauline Powell.

Ernest: Hugh, did you know that I— that before you met her—that Pauline and I—

Hugh: Pauline?

Ernest: She permits it.

Hugh: Did I know what?

Ernest: That I—that we had been together a great deal?

Hugh: Is the fact significant?

Ernest: You gain everything you want, Hugh, always. I thought if you knew that I— You are generous. It is not like you to interfere.

Hugh: Interfere? Ernest, what in the—?

Pauline (entering): Come, brave gentlemen. Let us go forth and meet the moon's bravado.

(They start toward her as the curtain falls.)

ACT III

SCENE I

(The time, a month later than Act II. The place is the laboratory of *Fillipo*. *Lucy Thornton*, dressed in a ball costume, enters.)

Lucy: *Fillipo*?

Fillipo (turning): Yes, lady.

Lucy (flinging down an open jewel case): What would you do to possess these?

Fillipo (with a cry): I'd be rich, rich. Topaz, opal, pearl, diamonds, beautiful! Can I serve you, lady? (Singling out a bracelet, triumphantly.) I said sometime—eh? Can I serve you, lady?

Lucy (in a whisper): Will you give me poison for them? Deadly poison! (Madly) Deadly poison, beautiful deadly poison. Poison that will burn the life from—can you, old man? Will you? They shall be yours, all yours.

Fillipo: Wait till I—

Lucy: Hurry! I will wait. They shall be yours.
(Chanting) Poison, poison, beautiful poison.

Fillipo (handing her a glass mask): 'Tis safer.

Lucy (tying mask): Do you mind if I watch you in this devil's smithy? Tell me which is the poison to poison her?

Fillipo (cunningly): Who is she?

Lucy: Her, Pauline. He is with her. They know that I know. He is dancing with her. She is in his arms. They laugh at me—I saw them! At me! They think my tears flow. I am here.

Fillipo (to himself): So are your jewels.

Lucy: What is that in the mortar? Gum? Is the exquisite blue in the soft phial yonder poison, too?

Fillipo: Best leave it alone.

Lucy: Fancy! What pleasure to carry pure death in an ear-ring or a fan mount. What bliss, when I dance at the King's, to give Pauline a lozenge; then she will have just thirty minutes to live. Hurry, old man, I am shivering with joy.

Fillipo (holding up a phial, critically): This'll do.

Lucy: Is it finished? Oh, that color's too grim. I want beautiful poison. Beautiful, deadly poison.

Fillipo: 'Tis deadly.

Lucy: What? But a drop? She's not little like me. She's no minion. That's why he couldn't see me. Do you understand, old man? Never looked at

me— One drop will not free her soul from those masculine eyes. It can never say No to her pulse's magnificent come and go.

Fillipo (sneering): 'Twould stop a hundred. One drop'll do it.

Lucy: Why, only last night as they whispered, I brought my eyes to bear on her, so. I thought if I could keep them fixed on hers half a minute, she would fall shrivelled. She did not. Yet you say this does it all?

Fillipo: I'd stake my life on it. She'll never know what killed her.

Lucy: I don't want you to spare her the pain. Let her feel death. Let it brand her—burn her—destroy her beauty. He is sure to remember her dying face.

Fillipo (soothingly): Yes, yes, little lady, so it'll do.

Lucy: Is it all finished? Take my mask off. (Reaching out her hand for the phial) If it hurts her, can it ever hurt me?

Fillipo: Be careful—

Lucy: Here, take all my jewels. Gorge gold to your fill. (Hugging phial) Beautiful poison, beautiful deadly poison. With joy I'll dance at the King's. (Exit.)

SCENE 2

(The King's ball, a little later than Scene 1. The rise of the curtain shows one of the small refreshment rooms off the ballroom. Music is heard off stage.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee are standing near the punch bowl, drinking, when the curtain rises.)

Mrs. Lee (tapping her foot): Let us hurry back, James.

Mr. Lee (curiously): Do you never tire of dancing, Cora?

Mrs. Lee (sweetly): Not with you. I have this waltz with you.

(*Mr. Lee* smiles, but goes out with her. *Hugh* and *John* enter. *Hugh* leisurely fills two glasses with punch.)

John (accepting a glass, and sinking into a seat): Thank you, Hugh. (Drinking.) This is heavenly after two waltzes and a schottische. I suppose I am getting old.

Hugh: Nonsense! None of us can hold a candle to you when it comes to waltzing, and you know it.

John: That is kind of you. You look fagged yourself, Hugh.

Hugh (wearily): No wonder. I may as well acknowledge that I am making a mess of things.

John: Isn't your plan working?

Hugh (moodily): Like the devil. I'm ready to quit.

John: Is Ernest—?

Hugh (wincing): Naturally, Ernest misunderstands me. I have eclipsed his sun, and he eyes me like a basilisk. He believes I have been untrue to our friendship. He thinks I have come like a thief in the night, and deliberately stolen what he had a right to look upon as his. He turns white and shaking when I appear. Lately, he avoids me.

John: You cannot blame him, Hugh. Does Miss Powell—?

Hugh (vehemently): I feel that I am a cur, an unspeakable cur, every time I think of it. She is not what you thought, what I believed. I like Pauline Powell.

John: How do you explain her actions if she is so different from our conceptions?

Hugh: Lack of understanding. She has had no idea of the real wrong she was doing. She simply did not believe men were sincere in their declaration. I doubt if she ever had a genuine emotion until—until—

John: I understand. Until you educated her.

Hugh (groaning): That was my plan, John. My miserable plan. She should think she was playing with me as she had done with Waring. My revenge was to come when she discovered her error.

John: Did she—?

Hugh: No. To my surprise, she made no efforts to entrap me. She was utterly indifferent. My pride was touched. I determined to make her love me.

John: Naturally.

Hugh: Yes, I'll confess it all. My cursed vanity gave me a sneaking desire to show Ernest that I could triumph where he had failed. I felt, of course, that in reality I was doing him a kindness. I did not consider Miss Powell's feelings in the least. I have kept on until now—a man can't help but know such things—she lies as tame to my hand as a late pear ready to be plucked, and I, heaven forgive me, for such fruit I have no desire, no use, but to fling it into the street.

John: Don't reproach yourself too keenly, Hugh. Nothing is more common than mistakes.

Hugh: True, but I can't escape the fact that I have involved others.

John: That is always the case, more or less.

Hugh (hesitantly): Have you noticed Lucy Thornton lately?

John: Yes, indeed! I was shocked at her appearance tonight.

Hugh (nods miserably): Poor little girl. She can't hide her emotions. It has been forced upon me that my meddling is the cause of her unhappiness.

John: Is it possible?

Hugh: To be plain, she has taken it into her head to be insanely jealous of Pauline Powell.

John: That is unfortunate, but I fail to see how you are at fault.

Hugh: I went to her home a good deal to see Miss Powell. I renewed my boyhood friendship with Lucy. I was low enough to try the experiment a few times of showing her marked attention in order to observe the effect on Miss Powell.

John: A little pebble, someone said, tossed into a quiet pool, may cause tremendous results. I wish I could help you.

Hugh: Thank you, John. I have blundered sufficiently as it is. My punishment would be unbearable if I were to involve you, too. (Rising to return to the ballroom.) Heaven knows how it will end! I am an egotistical Apollo driving the sun chariot, and my chariot is swinging too low towards the earth. (Exeunt to ballroom.)

(*Pauline Powell*, dressed in a beautiful ball costume, enters and sits at the left of the stage. *Ernest Hope* enters from the right.)

Ernest: Excuse me. I was looking for John.

Pauline: He has just gone out with Mr. Carelton.

Ernest: May I talk to you?

Pauline: Of course you may, Ernest.

Ernest: Why have you avoided me of late, Pauline?

Pauline: Have I avoided you?

Ernest: It is not like you to avoid an issue. You know very well you have.

Pauline: Well, then. I thought it was best for you, best for me, best for both of us.

Ernest: Best! (Passionately.) Do you have any conception, I wonder, of how I suffer?

Pauline: I am sorry, truly I am.

Ernest: I saw you riding with him again yesterday. You rode through my brain all night carelessly, recklessly, over my brightest hopes, my dearest dreams. You danced with him tonight. You tortured me all the while.

Pauline: Did I? (Compassionately.) Poor Ernest!

Ernest: I do not want your pity. Save that for your next dupe. (With a sudden change of manner.) Forgive me, Pauline. You are not to blame. You were perfectly fair with me. You warned me that you could never care for me. I thought my love would compel yours. And you would have loved me. You would have loved me if he had not come between us. You (desperately)—can you give me no hope, Pauline? None?

Pauline (gently): No, Ernest, I can not. And I do blame myself. If I had understood, perhaps, I could have saved you some—

Ernest: If you can not it is because you know, now, that you love Hugh.

Pauline (slowly, honestly): I—do not deny it.

Ernest: Why, even if he loved you, knew he loved you better than heaven itself, as I do, loyalty to our friendship bade him step aside, bade him control his passion. I would have done as much for him.

I trusted him. I would have trusted him with my life.

Pauline: He would not have betrayed your trust.

Ernest: But he has betrayed, deliberately betrayed—

Hugh (entering): Oh, Ernest— Pardon me.

Ernest (rising, white-faced, suffering): I—leave her to you, Hugh. She would have loved me, but you came between us.

Hugh: Ernest!

Ernest: It is too much to—bear. Your friendship was more to me than that of any other. My trust in you was absolute. I wish—never to see either of you again—I am going away (blindly) anywhere— (Exit Ernest.)

Pauline: Poor boy—! Hugh?

Hugh (bitterly, as if to himself): Too late. Eternally too late!

Pauline: Too late? For what?

Hugh: To save him from—you.

Pauline: From me? (Blankly.) Save him?

Hugh (wearily): I knew about Waring and others. Waring was my friend, my best friend. Ernest was next. He is such a fine chap—I thought I could save him—this.

Pauline: Then you don't—?

Hugh (mechanically): What?

Pauline (white to the lips): You have not meant any of the things— You have been amusing yourself all of the time?

Hugh: Forgive me, Pauline. I was a beast.

Pauline (piteously): You have never cared for me? Not even when—?

Hugh (wretchedly): No, I do not love you.

Pauline: Leave me, please. I am sufficiently humiliated, sufficiently punished. I never realized—I did not understand—I did not intend— Poor Ernest! Perhaps I deserve—(drooping). Oh, Hugh! How could you? Even if you saved Ernest, was my suffering nothing? What had I done to you?

Hugh: I was mad, surely, quite mad. I cannot hate myself sufficiently. I thought at first you were playing with me. When I decided you were not—

Pauline (in a low tone): I understand. It was too late.

Hugh: Believe me, Pauline, I would do anything to wipe out—

(*John and Lucy enter.*)

John: Oh—excuse us—we were coming for refreshments.

Hugh: Be seated, won't you?

John: I don't mind if I do— Old age—

Hugh: Have you danced yourself to tatters?

John: I'll confess I am somewhat done up.

Lucy (restlessly): I am not tired.

(She moves over to the punch bowl and fills four glasses. She gives one to *Pauline*, and then to *John* and *Hugh*. Her hand is shaking.)

Pauline (gently): Thank you, Little Lucy.

John: Thanks.

Hugh: You are very kind, Miss Thornton.

Lucy (laughing shrilly): Am I? Am I really kind?

John (dutifully): I have the next dance with you, have I not, Miss Powell?

Pauline (starting): The next dance? Yes. Shall we sit it out?

John: I am satisfied.

Hugh: Is your card full, Miss Thornton? You were not present when— What is it, John?

John (pressing his hand to his heart): My heart! (Attempting to rise, falling backward.) My heart is (writhing)—

Hugh (quickly, raising him): Can you speak, John? Is there anything we can do? Miss Powell, call—

John: The pain is—unbearable. I feel that I have—but—a few (gasping)—minutes.

Lucy (screaming): It was for her. (Shaking her hand at *Pauline*.) My beautiful poison for her. All my jewels for one drop of it. He said one drop—

Hugh: You, too, John.

John: Don't grieve, Hugh— One world passed, sooner than I thought. Nearer—Evelyn. (Dies.)

Lucy (glaring at the dead body): He drank it. It was for her. Deadly poison—my beautiful deadly poison.

Hugh: Lucy!

Lucy (babbling): One drop— She should burn as I have burned day and night. (Dancing.) I shiver with joy. I'll dance at the King's— One drop (laughing horribly)— Little Lucy! (After a moment *Lucy* sinks into a chair exhausted. *Pauline* goes to her. *Hugh* kneels beside *John* and looks into his face. *Mr.* and *Mrs. Lee* enter from the ballroom. They see *John* lying dead.)

Mrs. Lee: Why! What has happened?

Pauline (quickly): Won't you help us? *Mr. Darrow* is dead. *Lucy* is overcome. By all means keep the crowd away. Please go quietly and bring some one to help. That will be the greatest kindness you can do.

(Exeunt *Mr.* and *Mrs. Lee*. *Pauline* comes to *Hugh*.)

Pauline: I am sorry, Hugh.

Hugh (rising): It's an awkward thing to play with souls, and matter enough to save one's own! *Pauline*!

Pauline: You could not know—Waring and the others—and Ernest—it is not your fault. That I seemed light is very true. I did not think. (Pitifully.) Really, I did not know—not until—a little while ago— Good-by.

(*Pauline* turns and is leading *Lucy* away. *Hugh* watches them depart. When the door has almost closed, he starts impulsively as if to follow. Then he stops, and goes back to *John*.)

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